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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

WYNDHAM LEWIS: THE SATIRE OF ACCOMMODATION

by



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A THESIS

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend  
to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled  
WYNDHAM LEWIS: THE SATIRE OF ACCOMMODATION submitted by Catherine  
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of Doctor of Philosophy.





## ABSTRACT

The argument of this thesis was built up inductively. Out of a close analysis of five primary texts, and from Lewis's own critical statements, I have developed a working definition of Lewis's satire. In my view, Lewis was evolving throughout his working career a mode of exploration of the contemporary scene. At each stage of the period from 1912 to 1956 during which he was writing and painting, Lewis shaped an art to meet the demands of current conditions.

Recognizing that Lewis's satire was an instrument of exploration, I have attempted to define its field of operations and some of Lewis's principles for its use, in the first chapter of this study of his work. The term 'the satire of accommodation' is derived from Lewis's comment that with an 'external' or objective approach to the perception of reality, the scarab could be accommodated, and even a crocodile's tears relieved of some of their repulsiveness.

The bulk of my work consists of exegeses of particular books, taken in the context of a cluster of related works. It was Lewis's practice to write several books at once—despite the advice of Mr. T.S. Eliot—and the reader finds that a single book is often part of a conversation of works. Four chapters of analysis of individual texts are arranged chronologically, and they span the period from the major texts of the 1920's The Art of Being Ruled, Time and Western Man, and The Childermass in Chapter Two, The Vulgar Streak in Chapter Three, Monstre Gai and Malign Fiesta in Chapter Four, and finally The Red Priest. Because of the wide divergences in technique and satiric direction between The Childermass and its sequels in The Human Age, Monstre Gai



and Malign Fiesta, I have interposed my analysis of a satire from the inter-war years which has received little critical attention, The Vulgar Streak.

Lewis analyzed the significance of the extensions of human power through modern technology. In my examination of particular works several patterns of Lewis's symbols for power emerge, and these form elements of his satiric iconography. In the concluding chapter of this thesis I review some of these elements and then demonstrate that in his last book, Lewis extended his analysis of the contemporary power impulse to include the insane zero of nuclear war politics.

Lewis's satire was not, I argue, the lamentation of defeat. Rather, Lewis exposed the machinery that worked his satiric subjects, and explored alternate courses of action. As if to underscore his engagement in the life under his scrutiny, Lewis subjected his own function as satirist to close analysis. In satirizing the role of satirist itself, in the trilogy The Human Age, Lewis extended his satire metaphysically into an examination of the meaning and value of human experience.



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## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

### Plate 1 (after page 5)

Pole-Jump. From the portfolio Wyndham Lewis: Fifteen Drawings, 1919.

Pencil and water-colour wash. (9 x 11 inches)

Reproduced in Wilenski, English Painting, plate 90.

"The war was a sleep, deep and animal, in which I was visited by images of an order very new to me. . . . I can never feel any respect for a picture that cannot be reduced at will to a fine formal abstraction. But I now busied myself for some years acquiring a maximum of skill in work from nature -- still of course subject to the discipline I had acquired and which controlled my approach to everything." Lewis, Rude Assignment, 129.

### Plate 2 (after page 14)

Combat No. 2. c. 1914. Signed Wyndham Lewis.

Ink and pastel. (10-7/8 x 13-7/8 inches) Victoria and Albert Museum.

Fighting machine-men in the stylized attitudes of apache dancers enact their battles under the scrutiny of a quizzically-twisted periscope observer. The battleground resembles a constructivist stage of daises and runways.

### Plate 3 (after page 25)

The Mud Clinic. 1937.

Oil on Canvas. (33½ x 23¼ inches) Beaverbrook Gallery, Fredericton, N.B.

The central figure, resembling a roughed-out human form carved in wood, ties together the three groups of shaped forms around it. The shapely figures on the right appear to emerge as if in bas-relief from their wooden blocks. The lower left-hand figures are least distinct; one looks out with an immature face, while the others bow or turn their faces so that their eyes are not visible. The prone figures above (one, perhaps, floating a balloon) are stacked in cases which extend into the stratum of the bright green tree and moonlit sea. The lower third of the painting is a yellow-brown earth colour.





Plate 4 (after page 59)

Players on the Stage n.d. [1937]

Oil on canvas. (27 x 20 inches) The Leicester Galleries.

Charles Handley-Read comments on this painting that the figures "encased in box-like costumes. . . might be sign carriers in a modern ballet. The central figure is mechanistic, a Robot with a megaphone-mouth." The megaphone-head appears in fact at the acting level of a Punch-and-Judy performing box, suggested by the shape of the box and by the distinctive striped skirt at its base. On the upper level of the stage on which all the 'players' stand, the megaphone creature has the advantage in the angry confrontation. In the pit area or the procenium apron in the foreground, however, a fifth figure appears to be abstracting itself from the back of the failing minotaur. Connected to this new figure, a two-jointed hook-like appendage dominates the lower scene.

Plate 5 (after page 86)

A cartoon satirizing a mesmerist session.

From Cabinet des Estampes. Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, c. 1787. Reproduced in Darnton, Mesmerism, 5. The author's note is reproduced below the cartoon.

Plate 6 (after page 111)

Engine Fight-Talk. 1933. Design for the title-page of the section "Engine Fight-Talk" in One-Way Song.

The General Strike. 1930. Design for the title-page of the last section of The Apes of God.

The manacled hand of Alfred, the representative of the 'Carnegie batch' in The Childermass prefigured Lewis's symbol for the defeat of the workers and for the progressive superannuation of their function.

Plate 7 (after page 152)

Hitler practising in front of a camera. Reproduced in Maser, "Fahrplan eines Welteroerers," 47. Following is a literal translation of the centre commentary: "With a gramophone under his arm Hitler appeared one day in 1925 at the Munich home of his photographer, Heinrich Hoffman, in order to test with the help of the camera his effectiveness and the need for improvement in his oratorical poses. Hitler put on one of the recordings of his speeches and mimed with particular sentences his most telling gesture, while Hoffman set the shutter going.



During the Third Reich these pictures were not allowed to be made public."

Plate 8 (after page 152)

Hand of Friendship. January 14, 1938. Signed Low.  
Reproduced in Low, Years of Wrath, 52.

Off for the Holidays. July 31, 1936. Signed Low.  
Ibid., 37.

Low provided his own text to accompany the reprinting of his war-time cartoons from the pages of the London Evening Standard. Here, for example, he identifies the figures whom Lewis referred to in The Vulgar Streak: "Travelling in the Cabinet of Baldwin (whose mysterious references to what he could say if his lips were not sealed had earned him the popular nickname of 'Old Sealed Lips') were Simon (who had just announced that the doings of Fascists made his blood boil), Inskip, Cunliffe-Lister, Neville Chamberlain (who said sanctions were to be ended), Hoare (who favoured a deal with Mussolini), Duff-Cooper (who pledged Britain to eternal brotherhood with France), and Eden (who upheld sanctions and collective security.)"

Plate 9 (after page 184)

Still from Fritz Lang's Metropolis, 1926.

Reproduced in Wiseman, Cinema, 29.

Plate 10 (after page 211)

Inferno. 1937.

Oil on canvas. (60 x 40 inches) The Tate Gallery.

Reproduced in Wyndham Lewis the Artist, facing page 80.

Lewis wrote of this painting in the catalogue of the Leicester Galleries' Exhibition in 1937: "In this composition (an inverted T, a vertical red panel and a horizontal grey panel) a world of shapes locked in eternal conflict is super-imposed upon a world of shapes, prone in the relaxations of an uneasy sensuality, which is also eternal." Quoted in Handley-Read, The Art of Wyndham Lewis, 61.

The stone-grey lower forms in this painting may recall the final transformation of the peons in The Childermass. Again, the juxtaposition of the two panels suggests the two cities of The Human Age: Third City and Dis.



Plate 11 (after page 234)

Allegresse Aquatique. 1941. Signed Wyndham Lewis.

Water colour on paper. (12½ x 17½ inches) Art Gallery of Ontario.

In paintings from this period, Allegresse Aquatique and Lebensraum: the Battlefield, for example, the human figures dominate the foreground while the products of their technologies – windowless and deserted – stand up on the horizon. The hard bulk of the red building in Allegresse Aquatique and the broken cityscape of Lebensraum extend into the skyline from their base on the terrestrial plane, where the human element lives and dies.

Plate 12 (after page 234)

Lebensraum: The Battlefield. 1941. Signed Wyndham Lewis.

Water colour on paper. (12-3/4 x 18-3/4 inches) Art Gallery of Ontario.

In this painting a heap of human bodies, clothed in a variety of military uniforms, is merging into a mud hill. The helmets of the foot-soldiers have been displaced, and the round heads lie exposed among the rifles. At the rear, joining the sky with the earth, is a stand of uninhabitable stone structures, suggestive of a ruined modern city.

Plate 13 (after page 234)

1942. Signed Wyndham Lewis.

Water colour on paper. Victoria and Albert Museum.

This painting also was done during Lewis's stay in Canada, and it clearly belongs thematically and technically with the two paintings described above. Lewis here has crowded his sportive human figures into the narrow space between the shoulder of a rock formation and the edge of a narrow strip of land. Again, the figures seem to be merging into the flowing stream. Looming above and behind them is a broad-leaved tree, its shape suggesting the form of a massive explosion or waterspout. The pairs of lovers, the fish and bird-wing forms painted into the texture of the water and leaves, and a small stand of new shoots growing on the bank all suggest the awakening of new growth in this isolated pastoral.





## CHAPTER ONE

### WYNDHAM LEWIS ON SATIRE

In any synthesis of the universe, the harsh, the hirsute, the enemies of the rose, must be built in for the purposes as much of a fine aesthetic, as of a fine logical structure.<sup>1</sup>

The student of Lewis's satire has under his surveillance not only an enormous body of satirical fiction, but also a collection of provocative essays on the meaning and function of satire. The heightened, metaphorical language of Lewis's critical analyses of satire does not lend itself to simple paraphrase. A careful counterpointing of Lewis's own statements seems the more suggestive form of commentary. I have distinguished several interacting themes in Lewis's theories of satire. In the account of these theories which follows, the analysis sets off these themes for separate consideration. Lewis's satire itself advances on several fronts simultaneously.



Part I: The Intellect and the 'Truth of Natural Science'

Freedom is certainly our human goal, in the sense that all effort is directed to that end: and it is a dictate of nature that we should laugh, and laugh loudly, at those who have fallen into slavery, and still more, those who batten on it. But the artistic sensibility, that is another 'provision of nature.' The artist steps outside this evolutionary upward march, and looking back into the evolutionary machine, he explores its pattern—or is supposed to—quite cold-bloodedly.<sup>2</sup>

For Wyndham Lewis, the impartial truth of the artistic sensibility was a value that must be preserved against distortions from antagonist parties. Late in his life, he wrote that he had postponed the writing of a novel he had planned in order to publish a book of criticism and autobiography. Rude Assignment took on the priority of urgency because it was intended to correct a false picture not only of Lewis's books, but of "the nature of this type of work." Lewis was constantly engaged in what he called "the analysis of what is obsessional in contemporary social life."<sup>3</sup> Through his criticism, personal writings, and fiction, he wrote to clear a space for a far-seeing inspection of the contemporary scene.

For Lewis, satire was not a distortion of the world, but a corrective of faulty vision. The satirist's reality is the 'truth of natural science,' Lewis wrote, an objective truth freed from emotional colouring. "Indeed, often it is nothing but people's vanity that causes them to use that term [satire] at all: often they are, in what they call 'satire,' confronted with a description of their everyday life as close to the truth as that found in any other artistic formula. It is merely a formula based rather upon the 'truth' of the intellect than upon the 'truth' of the average romantic sensualism."<sup>4</sup> Lewis's



term 'formula,' used in this context, points to the ordering function of the creative sensibility as it constructs paradigms and emblems of experience. The act of creation is an act of the human will, and it isolates and fixes patterns of significance out of the movement of life. In "An Essay on the Objective of Art in our Time," Lewis quoted Schopenhauer's statement on the concreteness of the artist's vision:

While science, following the unresting and inconstant stream of the fourfold forms of reason and consequently, with each end attained sees further, and can never reach a final goal nor attain full satisfaction, any more than by running we can reach the place where the clouds touch the horizon; art, on the contrary, is everywhere at its goal. For it plucks the object of its contemplation out of the stream of the word's course, and has it isolated before it.<sup>5</sup>

Lewis described this pausing and isolating for contemplation, the artist's "'presence of mind' in the midst of empirical reality." In his intellectual detachment, the artist isolates himself too; "for he who opens his eyes wide enough will always find himself alone. Where the isolation occurs, of subject or object, outside or inside the vortex, is the same thing."<sup>6</sup>

In the stillness of this observation from the outside, the artist can discipline and formalize experience into forms of art. He becomes a showman, a logician in the arrangement of reality. Ker-Orr, the narrator in Lewis's first book of stories, The Wild Body, shows off the characters in the stories as a puppeteer might demonstrate the range of gestures and voices of the forms he has under his control. The showman drives his creations into a set narrow repertory of attitudes; yet by extrapolation, he sees them as formulations of life. For the spectator as well, the mechanism "merges. . . in the general variety of nature."<sup>7</sup> Lewis's showman Ker-Orr is the satirist who wanders into the experience of the Brittany peasants of the stories, and sees in the



arrangements of their lives circumscribed patterns of meaning. These patterns he calls 'inferior religions,' the exploration of which is the subject of his satire:

I would present these puppets, then, as carefully selected specimens of religious fanaticism. With their attendant objects or fetishes they live and have a regular food and vitality. They are not creations, but puppets. You can be as exterior to them, and live their life as little, as the showman grasping from beneath and working about a Polichinelle. They are only shadows of energy, not living beings. Their mechanism is a logical structure and they are nothing but that. . . .

So the great intuitive figures of creation live with the universal egoism of the poet. This 'Realism' is satire. Satire is the great Heaven of Ideas, where you meet the titans of red laughter; it is just below intuition, and life charged with black illusion.<sup>8</sup>

In The Lion and the Fox Lewis again applied the term showman to the satirist. "Shakespeare was like a superb, resourceful punch-and-judy showman: he would send his voice first up into the puppet that was the king, and then into the puppet that was the clown. . . ." <sup>9</sup> The showman, in order to create a just representation of the world in motion around him, had to eliminate his personality, or efface its distortions. His public function, which Lewis compared with that of the public executioner,<sup>10</sup> demands of him the mask of impassivity:

The material of which the mirror destined to reflect action is made is at the other pole to the violent ferments providing the substance of action. Perhaps, as the reflecting mind is at all events living, it would be better to say that it must be both motionless and deep to reflect to the fullest advantage the conflict occurring in the world.<sup>11</sup>

From his intellectual position of detachment the artist absorbs ideas and sensations from the environment, and then formulates their expression through his art:

Was Shakespeare a machiavellist himself? Did he relish and countenance the duplicity and ruthlessness that he so often depicted? Would he have inclined to be a machiavellian anti-Machiavel of the type of Frederick the Great of Prussia? . . .

Shakespeare is the only one of his contemporaries who seems to have been able to absorb the melodrama of italian life with equanimity. . . . The working of the puritan conscience at the spectacle of borgiaism is not exhibited by him.





It would not be true to say that these effects were not visible in Shakespeare's work; but they were mastered by the great vitality that, with a coolness equal to their own, reproduced them.<sup>12</sup>

The artist, Lewis wrote, is relieved of the obligation of the practical man to lie.<sup>13</sup> In a section of The Diabolical Principle called "My Bill of Rights," Lewis wrote that his intellectual freedom allowed him to be a non-partisan. "I advance the strange claim. . . to act and to think non-politically in everything, in complete detachment from all the intolerant watchwords and formulas by which we are beset. I am an artist and my mind, at least, is entirely free. . . ." <sup>14</sup> He could, he continued, be a radical or a royalist by turns, depending upon the swings of the balance of power. What mattered was to maintain a state of constant alertness and to counter a fashion with a corrective truth. It was his function as a perceptive observer of society to safeguard public access to reality and to sharpen an appetite for truth. "This book is about. . . the liberty to use, in the literary art, factual and speculative truth," Lewis wrote in concluding The Writer and the Absolute. "This investigation takes no count of the moral advantages of what is true: that is not necessary. It is, in fact . . . equally imperative (though with other objectives) to be granted access to what is, for the artist as for the moralist, and the former's need is the more comprehensive."<sup>15</sup>

As his anchor for the public truth of natural science, Lewis chose the 'external approach' to the representation of reality. This approach from the outside was the 'physical definition'<sup>16</sup> of the world of his painting and writing:

. . . if by 'philosophy of the eye' is meant that we wish to repose, and materially to repose, in the crowning human sense, the visual sense; and if it meant that we refuse (closing ourselves in with our images and sensa) to retire into the abstraction and darkness of an aural and







tactile world, then it is true that our philosophy attaches itself to the concrete and radiant reality of the optic sense. That sensation of overwhelming reality which vision alone gives is the reality of 'common-sense,' as it is the reality we inherit from pagan antiquity. And it is indeed on that 'reality' that I am basing all I say.<sup>17</sup>

Lewis analyzed and exhibited the radiance and multiplicity of the visual data in the showman's logical formulations: puppets, machines, and 'exuberant hysterical truths.' In Paleface, Lewis wrote that he took as his function the analyst's work "to solidify, to make concrete, to give definition to," his environment. "To postulate permanence. . . to crystallize that which (otherwise) flows away, to concentrate the diffuse, to turn to ice that which is liquid and mercurial—that certainly describes my occupation, and the tendency of all that I think."<sup>18</sup>

By definition, art projects something that is in the world; and ideally it is free from the domination of particular social ethics, or personal or political biases. "Its datum is everything. It sorts out and arranges, as science sorts out and arranges, and, at its best, it is not dissimilar in function: it can be used even as a perfectly good litmus paper for many an acid test. . . ."<sup>19</sup> The satiric truth of the detached observer, Lewis wrote, is the truth of common sense and the truth of natural science; it is a perceived external truth—the wisdom of the eye:

There is nothing of the hot innards of Freud-infected art — no "Phantasies of the Unconscious" about Satire, that you must allow. No, it is all constructed out of the dry shells and pelts of things. The surface of the visible machinery of life alone is used. . . . The bustling manners of the satiric art do not lend themselves to swamp-effects, and to the smudgings of the aura-lined spirit-pictures. All is metallic — all is external.<sup>20</sup>

Because art is in a constant and dynamic relationship with the life around it, the criterion of its value is its relevance. Lewis suggested that the practice of an art arises directly out of "our





functions of sight, hearing and so forth, and our functions as trained social animals, as political animals. . . and as religious animals." He concluded that art is in the same class as ritual performance and "all ceremonial forms and observances — a discipline, a symbolic discipline."<sup>21</sup>

Part II: "All living art is the history of the future."<sup>22</sup>

Marshall McLuhan, in his book Through the Vanishing Point, wrote that the artist, by perceiving his environment clearly, is able to provide new models of perception for his society. He can, through his work, correct the unconscious perceptual biases of a culture. The visionary artist sets up a mechanism which detaches the mind critically from the daily rhythm of social life. When the environment is thus consciously distanced by the mind, it can be used as a perceptual probe. It becomes 'self-conscious' instead of an unperceived and pervasive pattern. "Environment used as a probe or art object," he suggested, "is satirical because it draws attention to itself."<sup>23</sup> An artist creates this kind of critically aware environment — what McLuhan called an 'anti-environment' — through the models of perception in his art:

Any artistic endeavour includes the preparing of an environment for human attention. A poem or a painting is in every sense a teaching machine for the training of perception and judgement. The artist is a person who is especially aware of the challenge and dangers of new environments presented to human sensibility. Whereas the ordinary person seeks security by numbing his perceptions against the impact of new experience, the artist delights in this novelty and instinctively creates situations that both reveal it and compensate for it. The artist studies the distortions of the sensory life produced by new environmental programming and tends to create artistic situations that correct the sensory bias and derangement brought about by the new forms.<sup>24</sup>

The corrective functions of these models of perception are satiric in that they call for a radical readjustment of thought and





feeling. The perceptual probe of satire understood in these terms does not function on the plane of morality, but rather on that of aesthetic judgement. Because it presents a formulation of reality from the outside perspective, it seems grotesque or totally alien from conventional models. It impinges intellectually, challenging established methods of analysis. This perceptual probe does not attempt to substitute one system of belief for another. Instead it tries out a rescaling of the measures and models of perception of the environment. Writing about the satire of Cervantes and Rabelais, Lewis noted that one tendency in the art of both writers was to counterbalance a contemporary intellectual and perceptual bias. Both, he wrote, "floated their great new ventures on a popular tide of romantic fiction." Rabelais released his satire on a tide fed with such rivers of literary bombast as Conquêt du grant roy Chalemaigne des Espagnes, Tristan and Perceval:

The swarming of these chivalrous names will suggest to the eye the immensity of the literature of chivalries and enchantments en marge of which Cervantes and Rablais lived, half-fascinated with its baroque empty magnificence, no doubt, and half of necessity mocking its lack of proportion and simplicity, and poverty of human meaning. 'For the enjoyment the mind feels must come from the beauty and harmony which . . . the eye or the imagination bring before it. Nothing that has any ugliness about it or disproportion can give any pleasure.' (Don Quixote) The gigantic, and a sort of poverty about impossible powers or virtues, answer to this criticism.<sup>25</sup>

On the theme of the redress of imbalances and the reinstatement of order, Lewis wrote that Shakespeare resolved the surface pageantry of life into spare paradigms of 'human meaning.' "That great undressing of the dressed-up self in a simple phrase is Shakespeare's, and has a universal application. . . ." In this connection Lewis quoted King Richard's speech from Richard II (III.ii), which ends with the line "For you have but mistook me all this while." Lewis termed this speech a sort of parabasis of the author. "He always on these occasions



delivers himself in the same terms of these events, with a monotony, indeed, that sweeps them all into one monotonous eternally repeated event, which is life stripped of its typical variety and specific colouring."<sup>26</sup>

Correspondingly, Lewis wrote that his own satire was a corrective mechanism designed to redress balance and proportion in the perception of human possibilities. He wrote out of an awareness of change in social conditions of contemporary life, but he resisted attachments to predilections or beliefs that some particular order would transform society permanently for the better:

Today we stand, of course, midway between the old 'individualist' society, based on E.S.D., and the new collectivist society, based upon an armed terrorist central authority. Both probably possess enormous disadvantages. But for my part I am unable to imagine any human system of law and government that would not be bad. The 'impartial truth' of Science and Art must, like Mammon, pass over into the new dispensation, however—and that as intact as possible, if we are to be civilized at all. . . . This deterioration was recognized and violently commented upon by Ruskin, Samuel Butler, Thomas Carlyle, by Love Peacock, by Matthew Arnold—and, in short, by all the most clear-sighted people of the nineteenth century (the century of the Industrial Revolution), whose lot was cast in the midst of this universal collapse of taste. . . . Let us continue today to comment upon it. It is the best way of securing some small redress, and of keeping a limited area clear for the operations of the 'impartial truth' of art and of science. And especially as a new order is taking shape it is essential to petition it to repudiate the vulgarity of the bourgeois, as well as his wickedness.<sup>27</sup>

Lewis petitioned the new order not only on ethical, but also on aesthetic grounds. Art, appealing to the personal arbiter of taste and judgement, enables the artist and his student to make a successful adjustment to the conditions of his life. "Art provides some richer and more spacious way of acting and communicating than that provided by the scientific, material world," he wrote.<sup>28</sup>

The artist multiplies his personality in the creation of viable models of perception.<sup>29</sup> He constructs new conformations out of the



materials around him. "Rubens," Lewis wrote, "IMITATED Life: he borrowed the colour of its crude blood, he traced the sprawling and surging of its animal hulks. Leonardo MADE NEW BEINGS, delicate and severe, with as ambitious an intention as any ingenious medieval Empiric. He multiplied in himself, too, Life's possibilities."<sup>30</sup> The plastic suggestions of the world around the artist can be organized imaginatively into new formulations of reality. These fresh models give the mind a second look at the visual field around it. Lewis discussed this process of extending the artistic sensibility in his "Notes and Vortices":

11. It is always the POSSIBILITIES in the object, the imagination, as we say, in the spectator, that matters. Nature itself is of no importance.

12. The sense of objects, even, is a sense of the SIGNIFICANCE of the object: not its *avoi*rdupois, its scientifically ascertainable shapes and perspectives.<sup>31</sup>

The creations of the artist go beyond mere imitation of nature, argued Lewis. The artist's perceptual field is extended by the technologies which modify the environment, and the range of possibilities for the development of matter has expanded around him. "When nature finds itself expressed so universally in specialized mechanical counterparts, and cities have modified our emotions," Lewis wrote, the artist must extend himself to encompass this expanded nature:

22. Da Vinci recommends you to watch and be observant of the grains and markings of wood, the patterns found in Nature everywhere. The patterned grains of stones, marble, etc., the fibres of wood, have a rightness and inevitability that is similar to the rightness with which objects arrange themselves in life.<sup>32</sup>

28. The finest artists—and this is what Art means—are those men who are so trained and sensitized that they have a perpetually renewed power of DOING WHAT NATURE DOES, only doing it with all the beauty of accident, without the certain futility that accident implies.<sup>33</sup>

Again, in Lewis's view, the surface formulations which particular





historical periods impose are outmoded in the modern age of rapid change. Immense and rapid critical revaluations in the contemporary world operate simultaneously across the entire earth, he wrote. "What can the artist at present hope for? Only that the gladiatorial phase will pass, and that all the novel perspectives of this universal stage at length may be utilized."<sup>34</sup>

The artist responds to his environment aesthetically with the deliberation of an organism in its biological adaptation to meet new conditions. By the extensions of his intellect through art, he probes his environment experimentally. In his essay "The Artist Older than the Fish," Lewis continued his analysis of the adaptive multiplication of the artist. "The creation of a work of art is an act of the same description as the evolution of the wings on the sides of a fish, the feathering of its fins; or the invention of a weapon within the hymenopter to enable it to meet the terrible needs of its life."<sup>35</sup> The satiric exploration of the social environment in transformation resembles these fish and insect adaptations. Within the closed system of nature, the process of animal adaptation does not progress to an ultimate form, just as within the closed system of human society, the process of adjustment is constant and dynamic. This art that responds dynamically to the life around it is in a feedback relationship with the source of its data. The relationship is sustaining because both experience and expression are constantly responsive. The artist cannot hope either to stay fixed at one position or to change the world into a set pattern of his own fixed design:

Once one has recognized quite clearly that there are insuperable difficulties—difficulties inherent in the semi-animal, irrational, basis of human life—to dreams of theoretic political perfection: that there is a great non possamus at the bottom of all our intellectual





planning and plotting—a perfectly insurmountable organic snag. . . as a concrete architect one's occupation's gone.<sup>36</sup>

With this 'Old Adam'<sup>37</sup> as his material, the artist cannot design monuments of ethical perfection in his work. Indeed, Lewis suggested, it could be perhaps asserted that "the greatest satire cannot be moralistic at all: if for no other reason, because no mind of the first order, expressing itself in art, has ever been taken in, nor consented to take in others, by the crude injunctions of any purely moral code." Satire has a code of judgements which finds expression free of established conventions:

The artistic impulse is a more primitive one than the ethical: so much is this the case—so little is it a mere dialect of the rational language in which our human laws are formulated, but, on the contrary, an entirely independent tongue—that it is necessary for the artist to change his skin, almost, in passing from one department into another. You cannot with the same instruments compass a work of edification and a work of beauty—and satire may be 'beautiful' rather in the way that mathematics claims to be. . . .<sup>38</sup>

The satiric writer's understanding of his environment gives him an enormous perceptual advantage—as it were, "the theoretical ground of the lever of Archimedes."<sup>39</sup> The extensions of his imagination range into the future as well as the present. Lewis wrote in his autobiography of 1950, that he had been writing 'into the future' from the beginning of his career. "It was, after all, a new civilization that I—and a few other people—was making the blueprints for. . . . A rough design for a way of seeing for men who as yet were not there. . . . It was more than just picture-making: one was manufacturing fresh eyes for people, and fresh souls to go with the eyes."<sup>40</sup> Much earlier, in 1922, Lewis had written of this necessary extension of the artist into the future. The creative intelligence, he wrote, is "the host of the un-lived thing," for it contains the future:



I think that every poet, painter or philosopher worth the name has in his composition a large proportion of future as well as of past. The more he has, the more prophetic intuition, and the more his energy appears to arrive from another direction to that of the majority of men (namely, the past), the better poet, painter or philosopher he will be.<sup>41</sup>

A list of some of Lewis's titles points to his own practice of projecting models of future conditions: Men Without Art, The Doom of Youth, The Art of Being Ruled, The Human Age, The Caliph's Design, and America and Cosmic Man. He wrote into the era of future possibilities out of his own perception of significant patterns of present experience. This projection is a technique of theoretical exploration, of a landscape not yet fully realized. Lewis's cartography of the future, although necessarily intuitive, takes shape in the recognition of material reality. Lewis adjusted his pictures physically or visually in accordance with a coherent theory of emerging possibilities. In Men Without Art, Lewis wrote, "Art will die, perhaps. It can, however, before doing so, paint us a picture of what life looks like without art. It will be, of course, a satiric picture. Indeed it is one."<sup>42</sup>

One of Lewis's perceptual probes into present and future conditions is his exploration of the effects of technology on human culture. Throughout his novels, for example, characters are seen to be adapting their behaviour along patterns taught them by machine functions. Again, Lewis explores man's possible future image of himself in the face of emerging forms of energy. In The Human Age, the two parts of which were written twenty-seven years apart, the reader traces Lewis's prophetic documentation of the reshaping of the human mind. Human mentality is observed responding to projections of technical power, ranging from the electric media of radio and television to the atom bomb. In The Doom of Youth, Lewis incorporated the medium of newspaper



reportage into his own text, working through montage to expose the newspaper commentary to a new angle of vision. In his examinations of technological innovation, Lewis attempted to stir his readers to new awareness of the unperceived influence the new media had in their lives. We judge a work of art, he wrote, by its capacity to effect a "total mobilization" of our faculties; but too often we fail to recognize the manipulation of our sensibilities by other forms of expression:

Implicit in the serious work of art will be found politics, theology, philosophy—in brief all the great intellectual departments of the human consciousness. . . . But what is not so clear to very many people is that the most harmless piece of literary entertainment—the common crime story for instance, or the schoolboy epic of the young of the English proletariat centred around the portly figure of Bunter, "the owl of the Remove" (see Magnet Library, weekly 2d., of all newsagents) is at all events politically and morally influential. . . . And the influence upon the mind of the whole nation, adult and juvenile, of the Hollywood film-factory is terrific: for 'shaping lives' it is obviously an engine comparable to the Society of Jesus. Why people find this and analogous facts so difficult to understand astonishes me. Yet a whole barbarous system of conduct, and judgements to match, is implied in every flick of the kinetic novelettes.<sup>43</sup>

In a foreword written to the catalogue of the 'Exhibition of English Post-Impressionists, Cubists and Others,' held in Brighton from November 1913 to January 1914, Lewis commented on the work of the English painters Frederick Etchells, Cuthbert Hamilton, Edward Wadsworth, C.R.W. Nevinson and himself. His comments connected the expression of the plastic arts with the problem of extending the modern sensibility to an awareness of the technology surrounding it. "These painters are not accidentally associated here, but form a vertiginous, but not exotic, island in the placid and respectable archipelago of English art. This formation is undeniably of volcanic matter and even origin, for it appeared suddenly above the waves following certain seismic shakings beneath the surface." The work of these painters, he continued, emerging out of these 'seismic' disruptions in the time since Cézanne,





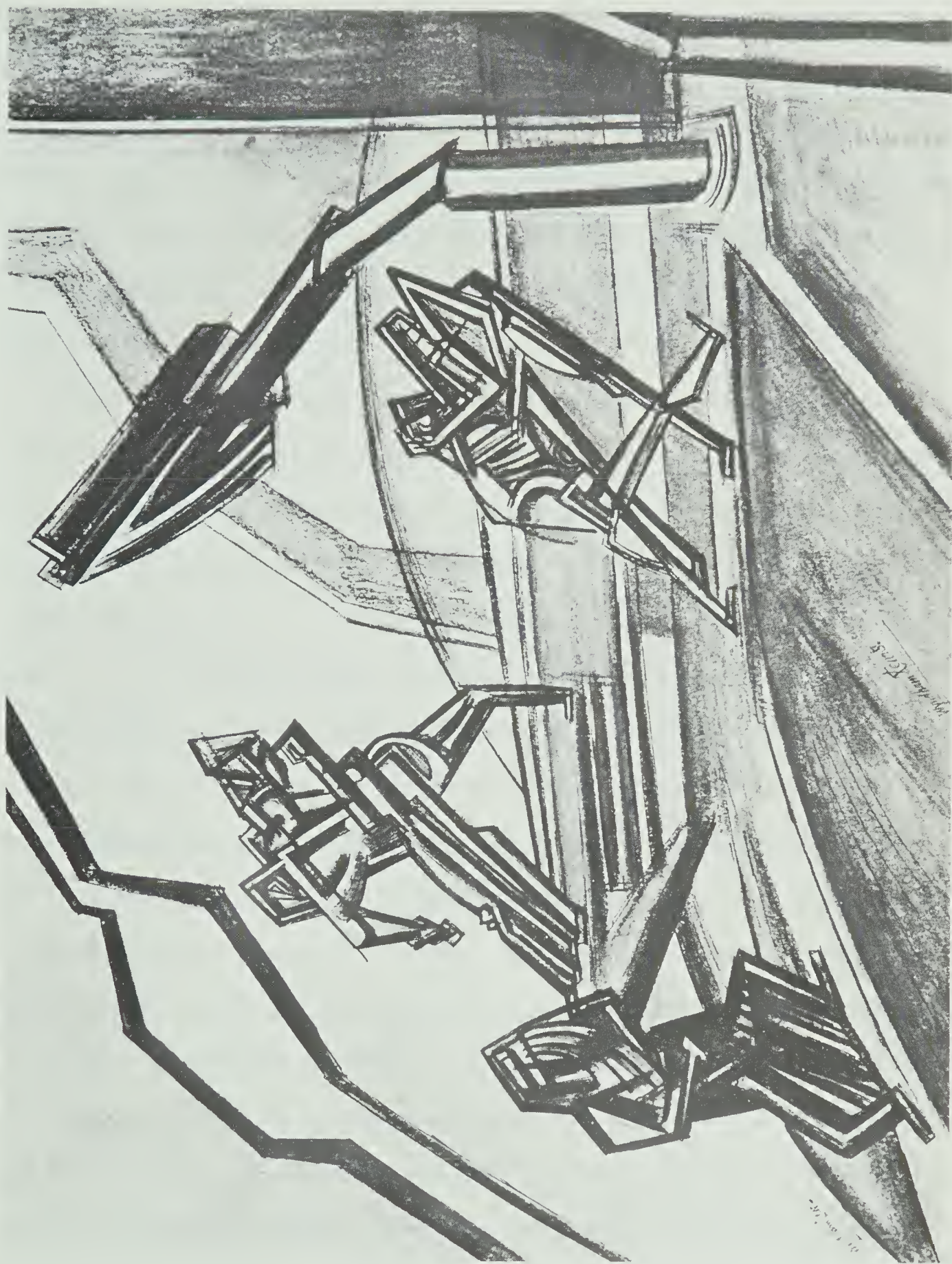


Plate 2





demonstrated radically new geometric bases and structures of life.

"All revolutionary painting today has in common the rigid reflections of steel and stone in the spirit of the artist; that desire for stability as though a machine were being built to fly or kill with. . . ."

Lewis concluded his foreword with a comment on the work of Jacob Epstein. "He finds in the machinery of procreation a dynamo to work the deep atavism of his spirit. Symbolically strident above his work, or in the midst of it, is like the Pathé cock, a new born baby, with a mystic but puissant crow."<sup>44</sup>

Lewis perceived that revolutionary science was reshaping men's lives and their expressions in art. The internal combustion engine, he wrote, was a greater revolutionary force than that of the political ideologies of Stalin or Lenin. "They have tinkered with the human spirit. But science has uprooted life itself. It has made man into a bird. . . ." Yet despite this enormous upheaval in the machine age, "men have shown an alarming disability to adjust themselves to new conditions. Much less have they shown any alacrity to take hold of the new conditions and shape them to the advantage of human life. Hence this 'Poverty in the Midst of Plenty' situation. Hence our fresh wars, and continual revolutions."<sup>45</sup> In the face of this alarming failure to make critical readjustments, Lewis wrote and painted to draw attention to the need for greater awareness. In his satire, he showed models of the possible outcome of continuing failures to make these adjustments. Many of his books and paintings are what Marshall McLuhan terms the 'probes' of the environment. That is, they were instruments of exploration and research. The satiric art that probes the artist's world functions, ideally, independently of particular moral biases. It is an



instrument of independent research, which, if it is to function effectively, must work autonomously. This form of satiric exploration permits the artist to range freely over the perceptual field:

I am a satirist, I am afraid there is no use denying that. But I am not a moralist: and about that I make no bones either. And it is these two facts, taken together, which constitute my particular difficulty. It is contended, against the satirist, that since man is not autonomous—and who but will agree to that I hope?—he cannot arm himself with laughter and invective, and sally forth to satirical attacks upon his neighbour, without first acquiring the moral sanction of the community—with whose standards and canons of conduct he must be at one—and first advertising himself as a champion of some outraged Mrs. Grundy. So, with Mrs. Grundy on the one side, and Dr. Bowdler on the other, and with a big crocodile tear in his eye (at the thought of the pain he may have to inflict), he sets himself in motion.<sup>46</sup>

### Part III: Ethics and Autonomy

There is of course no question that satire of the highest order has been achieved in the name of the ethical will. Most satire, indeed, has got through upon the understanding that the satirist first and foremost was a moralist. . . . One of the things it is proposed to do in these pages is to consider the character, and the function of, non-ethical satire; and if possible to provide it with a standing, alongside the other arts and sciences, as a recognized philosophic and artistic human activity, not contingent upon judgements which are not specifically those of the artistic or philosophical mind.<sup>47</sup>

Lewis set this statement under the chapter heading "The Greatest Satire is Non-Moral," in Men Without Art. He had stated in The Lion and the Fox that both tragedy and satire are directed at the fortunate.

"They are both occupied with hubris, whose representatives they execute. But whereas satire is essentially ethical, or it is difficult for it not to be, tragedy does not necessarily regard its victim with exultation, however much it shares in the general delight of his fall."<sup>48</sup> In these two statements, Lewis clearly allowed for a satire which operates to castigate vice within a moral code. Indeed, Lewis's definition of this kind of satiric function would eliminate mere folly as a legitimate



target. "When. . .any strong moral element is present, as in the pictures of Hogarth, where it is vice rather than folly that is the target, or folly that is so noxious as to amount to vice. . .we are in the presence of satire."<sup>49</sup>

In his own satiric writing, Lewis created figures who function in this pattern of moral satire. They are fundamentally moralists, or satirists in the particular sense here defined. Significantly, these figures, like Percy Hardcaster in The Revenge for Love, Vincent Penhale in The Vulgar Streak, James Pullman in The Human Age and René Harding in Self-Condemed, are cast into the role of schoolmasters in their closest relations with other characters. They criticize evil in the social and political life around them. Many of these specific moral judgements are Lewis's own, as for example those on the economics of usury in The Vulgar Streak. Again, when James Pullman deplores the exploitation of youth in the Third City of The Human Age, we recognize Lewis's arguments from The Doom of Youth and other political analyses. These moral judgements are made within the narrative context of the work, and they are not countered by any convincing antagonists' arguments.

Simultaneously, however, Lewis's satire functions on a level once removed from this moral satire of the narrative. The satirist is himself satirized. His role as moral arbiter ultimately leads him to renounce his own humanity. "Perfect laughter, if there could be such a thing," Lewis wrote, "would be inhuman,"<sup>50</sup> Each of these characters who presumes to this inhuman laughter betrays some representative of the good and innocent element in society. In the case of Vincent Penhale, for example, both his wife and his sister suffer innocently as a direct result of Vincent's antagonism to the values of his society. In this





symbolic formulation of the fiction, Lewis demonstrated the significance of his non-moral satire. The narrowly-moralistic satirists within the fiction are logically pursued to an extreme isolation. In this cul de sac of moral absolutes, they betray an innocent representative of humane values, and so deny their own humanity. "Perfection, therefore, from this standpoint appears as a platonic ideal, and is a thing with which we have not very much to do on our present road."<sup>51</sup> Schopenhauer's comment that art pauses at a particular thing, and plucks the object of its contemplation isolated out of the world's stream, points to the immortality of the objects of art. "It is an immortality," Lewis wrote, "which, in the case of painting, they have to pay for with death, or at least with its coldness and immobility,"<sup>52</sup> This coldness and immobility of the art object are unattainable to a living human being.

Lewis underlined the meaning of these symbolic destructions of his characters in the powerful metaphors he associated with his defeated satirists. Hardcaster, in The Revenge for Love, is reduced to a mask, with a single tear rolling down its flat cheek onto the dirt of a Spanish prison floor. Vincent Penhale, at the end of The Vulgar Streak, hangs by a "disused gas-suspension," with a note pinned to his chest: "Whoever finds this body, may do what they like with it. I don't want it. Signed, its former inhabitant."<sup>53</sup> René Harding, in Self-Condemed, becomes a 'glacial shell' of a man. At the end of The Human Age, Pullman is aware that he is perilously close to becoming hollow at the core. "The core of him, the inner being, which normally extended for the full length, shrank and shrivelled. It was as if a small animal was rushing up and down inside of him, looking for a place to conceal itself."<sup>54</sup> Out of these examples a pattern emerges. These inanimate shells of





persons have stepped outside the bounds of human possibility. Their destruction of their closest human companions is a token of their self-destruction:

The game of cricket, or of tennis, is an ingenious test of our relative, but indeed quite clumsy and laughable, physical prowess. These games depend for their motive on the physical difficulties that our circumscribed extension and capacities entail. It is out of the discrepancy between absolute equilibrium, power and so on, of which our mind is conscious, and the pitiable reality, that the stuff of these games is made. Art is cut out of a similar substance.<sup>55</sup>

In his capacity for reason man is aware not only of his physical, but also of his metaphysical limitations. "Laughter," Lewis wrote, "is the emotion of tragic delight."<sup>56</sup> It is the instinctive response of the mind aware of its absurd limitations:

Although the mind possesses immensely more scope and resource, and its exercise is vastly more complex and exciting, it ultimately is marking time as much as the body, it has the movements of marching forward, but it does not march, but is energetically drumming on one spot all the while. Its method is built up, like that of the game, on the same reservations; and even like the appetite for the game, is mixed with a sense of the weak and the ridiculous.

The art impulse reposes upon a conviction that the state of limitation of the human being is more desirable than the state of the automaton; or a feeling of the gain and significance residing in this human fallibility for us. It is to feel that our consciousness is bound up with this non-mechanical phenomenon of life; that helpless in face of the material world, we are in some way superior to and independent of it; and that our mechanical imperfection is the symbol of that. In art we are in a sense playing at being what we designate as matter.<sup>57</sup>

Lewis's comment on Flaubert's satire explored the anarchic motive in a universal criticism of life. Flaubert, he wrote, was in a class by himself, "or perhaps the first member of a new class." He chose mankind for his target, rather than any particular man. "It was," Lewis concluded, "the satire of nihilism."<sup>58</sup>

Lewis stated his case for non-moral satire most fully in Men Without Art. In his satiric art Lewis too dealt "with man, and not with manners." The targets for his criticism were not the particular vices



of specific times and places, but the fact of vice itself. "It is a chronic ailment (manifesting itself, it is true in a variety of ways) not an epidemic state; depending upon 'period,' or upon the 'wicked ways' of a particular smart-set of the time."<sup>59</sup> He was, he wrote, a satirist, but not a moralist, and it was the coincidence of these two facts which made his art unpopular. For by denying his subjects the satisfaction of being labelled 'wicked' in the conventional sense, he affronted them doubly:

If you remove from satire its moralism, then it has no advertisement value whatever for the victim—then it is doubly deadly, and then also the satirist is doubly hated by those picked out for attack. And society also, the implicit ally of the moralist, is in a sense offended (though the way society takes it depends upon the society—ours luckily does not stand upon its moral dignity very much).<sup>60</sup>

A "Cain among craftsmen," the satirist of Lewis's description formulates "a metaphysical satire occupied with mankind." In introducing his essays in Men Without Art, Lewis noted the irony of his attempting to define the ethical and political status of his satiric performance:

It is as though an illusionist came forward and engaged us in arguments about his right to make men vanish, to cause rabbits to issue from their breast-pockets, to read their thoughts, and the sound reasons that he had for plunging swords into baskets, and bringing them forth dripping with innocent blood.<sup>61</sup>

In periods of the most radical technological and social change, the satirist of morality can only base his judgements on a value system which is itself mutable.<sup>62</sup> Conventions of morality shift within gaps of time, place, and among generations in human society. Just as fundamental, although not so readily conceded, is the variability of moral standards seen from the outside or from the inside points of view. Under the heading "The Quality of Machiavelli's Candour," in The Lion and the Fox, Lewis juxtaposed a speech by Moll Flanders on the art of



picking pockets with Machiavelli's essay "The Way to Govern Cities."

The two passages demonstrated, Lewis argued, the winning simplicity of an insider's view of a particular code of conduct. Conversely, looked at from the outside, from a position of intellectual autonomy, any conventional code invites ethical censure. "It is a commonplace that, pursued to its effects, far enough and deep enough, the most civilized canons lead to oppression and manslaughter. It is only because his system is individualistic that that of the pickpocket or tyrant is repulsive to us."<sup>63</sup>

Lewis argued for the satirist's freedom of performance against the conventional requirements of adherence to a particular code of beliefs. In The Mysterious Mr. Bull, he defended satire, "as one might defend, against the Christian Scientist, the calling of a surgeon, or, against the anti-vivisectionist, operations on the living dog."<sup>64</sup> Lewis himself operated on the 'living dog' in three distinct contexts of satiric significance. He probed it in a physiological sense, examining its physical structure, the details of its anatomy and its evolutionary or adaptive potentiality. Morally, he tested its behaviour in the context of a particular ethical code. Further, the metaphysical status of this living being challenged the authority of its examiner. The observer became the observed. "Laughter," Lewis wrote in The Wild Body, "is the climax in the tragedy of seeing, hearing, and smelling self-consciously."<sup>65</sup> It is our "god-like attribute," which must "rather light up everything we handle as artists, than blast and stunt the objects necessary to our craft."<sup>66</sup> Realizing his own animal and metaphysical limits, the satirist rejoices in his perception:

'Satire,' as I have suggested that word should be used in this essay, (applying to all the art of the present time of any force at all) refers to an 'expressionist' universe which is reeling a little, a little





drunken with an overdose of the 'ridiculous'—where everything is not only tipped, but steeped in a philosophical solution of the material not of mirth but of the intense and even painful sense of the absurd. It is a time, evidently, in which homo animal ridens is accentuating—for his deep purposes no doubt, and in response to adverse conditions—his dangerous, philosophic, 'god-like' prerogative—that wild nihilism that is a function of reason and of which his laughter is the characteristic expression.<sup>67</sup>

#### Part IV: The Satire of Accommodation

The external approach to things (relying upon evidence of the eye rather than of the more emotional organs of sense) can make of 'the grotesque' a healthy and attractive companion. Other approaches cannot do this. The scarab can be accommodated—even a crocodile's tears can be relieved of some of their repulsiveness. For the requirements of the new world-order this is essential. And as for pure satire, there the eye is supreme.<sup>68</sup>

"Laughter does not progress," Lewis wrote in The Wild Body. "It is primitive, hard and unchangeable."<sup>69</sup> Imperfection is the norm of human existence. It cannot be cancelled or circumvented in any permanent sense. "To begin with, I hold that there is never an end; everything of which our life is composed, pictures and books as much as anything else, is a means only, in the sense that the work of art exists in the body of the movement of life."<sup>70</sup> In the second number of his periodical Blast, which Lewis published in 1915, he reviewed a number of contemporary movements in art. Much of his commentary was critical, he concluded, but he distinguished carefully between a dynamic system of analysis and a static system of final evaluations of the living art:

In the first place this inspection was undertaken, as I made clear at the start, to show the ways in which we DIFFER, and the tendencies we would CORRECT, and not as an appreciation of the other groups brought under review, which would be quite another matter. They are definitely an analysis then, not an appraisalment. Everything is analysed. Nothing is right, or there would be nothing further to do. We are inventors.<sup>71</sup>

It was a distinction which Lewis kept clear through his practice of critical analysis, although his tone often rose above the dispassionate.





In Time and Western Man, for example, he wrote that "to say that I disagree with Spengler would be absurd. You cannot agree or disagree with such people as that: you can merely point out a few of the probable reasons for the most eccentric of their spasms, and if you have the patience—as I have—classify them."<sup>72</sup>

In the movement of life no individual can escape his limitations. The creative minority of society constantly work to counterbalance the undisciplined mediocrity of taste in the majority. This work is largely a self-discipline, and an extension of the self:

The teacher exhausts himself on the unwilling scholar; the creative writer has to waste all but a fraction of his time in wresting from society the physical means to create; the man of science sees his discoveries misused by that violent moron monopolising wealth and power, whose unintelligence is only matched by his destructiveness. Lastly, the exceptional politician, a Lenin or a Jefferson, has the most difficult material to work in of any creative mind.—Yet as between man and creative man, there is no difference of kind. Their destinies are not inseparable. There can be no super-men. Separation could only be of a much more limited order.<sup>73</sup>

There is no superior race of men, Lewis concluded, only a variation up and down the scale of imagination and discipline. The function of satiric awareness as Lewis defined it is "to keep the primitive at bay."<sup>74</sup> "Art," he wrote, "is the civilized substitute for magic; as philosophy is what, on a higher or more complex plane, takes the place of religion."<sup>75</sup> Living art is a commentary on life, or in Arnold's phrase, 'a criticism of life;'<sup>76</sup> and it must keep resilience if it is to be a viable system of responses and corrections. "Art is an enemy of all excess," Lewis wrote. "The blood of the roman circus. . .the exaggeration, emphasis, and unreality of all forms of common melodrama, are all in the same class, and are vulgar first, and evil because of that: the ethical canon must ultimately take its authority from taste."<sup>77</sup>



The accommodating, elastic standards of art sharpen the perceptual awareness and allow for a correction of conventional moral and aesthetic biases. The 'law and order' mentality which excises unattractive features from the perceptual field of its experience manifests a failure of the imagination. Lewis explored the problems inherent in the limitations of tolerance in both the context of the art which gives an account of life, and of the human life of which that account is given:

The question of a criterion is forever the ultimate difficulty where art is concerned. When the social life, on which art depends becomes especially diseased and directionless, it appears with more insistence than ever, forced out of the contradictions beneath. This is because the picture, statue, or book is in effect a living and active thing, evolving with other living things, and suffering their checks and distresses.<sup>78</sup>

In Paleface, Lewis analysed the viability of what he termed a 'vertical' and well-integrated system of social tolerances. The social upheavals of the period between the two world wars, he suggested, threw into sharpest relief features which he took to be chronic in the human condition. When moral boundaries shifted, it was as if everyone were suddenly a landless immigrant. "We are in a world in which we are all in some sense outlaws," he wrote, "for our traditions have all been too sharply struck at and broken and no new tradition is yet born."<sup>79</sup> In the modern period of such radical social change and machine transformations this 'outlaw' status was to become the new norm:

The 'common good' can, then only be defined, in a general way, as the law of any social organism. . . . So it must be the law, I think, of a fairly active and perpendicular—a well-proportioned, elastic, orderly—society.—As for the indefinite expansiveness of the idea of the 'good,' or of the 'human' without limit of time or place—so that any number of units may be embraced by a law that is unique—there again the emotional or sentimental expansiveness of the protestant moralist seems to me to be at fault, and to provide for us, in place of a well-built society, an emotional chaos.<sup>80</sup>



The art of this orderly society of Lewis's description had to be resilient and constantly relevant through changing conditions. "There is something sanguine, something highly optimistic, about Satire," he wrote. "I will not say that it is 'hearty,' but it does postulate rude health."<sup>81</sup> The vulgarity and absurdity of the artist's environment, just as much as its beauty, provide him with the materials for his craft. The liveliest art is a force which can analyze and order the most disparate facts of experience, to forge 'an art out of discords:'

Adverse climatic conditions—drastic Russian winters for example—account for work of great profundity and beauty. England, which stands for anti-Art, for mediocrity and brainlessness, among the nations of Europe, should be the most likely place for great Art to spring up. England theoretically should be ideal. It is just as unkind and inimical to art as the Arctic zone is to life.

This—where we live—is the Siberia of the mind. If you grant that, you will at once perceive the source and reason of my optimism.<sup>82</sup>







Plate 3





## CHAPTER TWO

### THE CHILDERMASS<sup>1</sup>

In two enormous books of satire written within two years of each other, Lewis blew up to grotesque dimensions figures representing forces at work in contemporary society. The Apes of God canvassed a society of huge puppets as they fed themselves parasitically on the energies of creative intelligence. With the Bailiff in The Childermass Lewis created the first major figure in a Twentieth Century mythology of power. Out from this central figure, Lewis expanded his mythology in painting and writing over a period of thirty years, and he accommodated new extensions of human power as they emerged. The Bailiff's death-camp magnified the condition of Britain in the midst of technological transformation after the First World War. Through the consciousness of two wanderers on this war-blasted plain, Lewis explored the effects of the extension of new forms of power into the shell-shocked community of dead men. At the narrative level two types of humanity, Pullman and Satters, evolve a fragile human interdependence as they test their faculties within the Bailiff's field of force.



Part I: Introduction

PULLMAN. 'Step out. Pick your feet up. If you must go nowhere,  
step out.'<sup>2</sup>

At the opening of The Childermass Lewis sets his scene 'Outside Heaven.' "It is here that in a shimmering obscurity the emigrant mass is collected within sight of the walls of the Magnetic City."<sup>3</sup> They are the dead gathered in a camp to await the judgement of the inspecting officer of these regions, the Bailiff. Two former friends from University meet again here in death and renew their relationship. They are James Pullman, a thin, greyed former schoolmaster and Sattersthwaite, a heavy blond youth. Sattersthwaite had been Pullman's fag in school and he falls back into his role in this camp composed completely of men. "'Pullman? I thought so! Well I'm damned!'"<sup>4</sup> Soon after they have met, Pullman and Satters set out to explore the plain between a ridge of mountains and the river that lies between the Camp and the City to the heavenly North. Led mainly by Pullman and straying often from recognizable tracks, the pair feel their way through an elastic environment: Never before have there been so many objects of uncertain credentials or origin: as it grows more intricate Pullman whisks them forwards, peering into the sky for lost stars twirling about as he has to face two ways at once on the qui vive for the new setting, fearing above all reflections, on the look-out for optical traps, lynx-eyed for threatening ambushes of anomalous times behind the orderly furniture of Space or hidden in objects to confute the solid at the last moment, every inch a pilot.<sup>5</sup>

Traversing several compartments of time and space, Pullman and Satters find their way back to the bank of the river where they attend the magnificent arrival of the Bailiff's barge ferrying the Magistrate and his retinue from the other side. The day's trial of the petitioners begins with the Bailiff's welcoming address and an explanation of his



function. "'Gentlemen! I am glad to see you all looking so well and so much yourselves. That is capital: to be oneself is after all the main concern of life, irrespective of what your particular version of self may be. It is remarkable how distinct you all are this morning. My warmest congratulations.'"6 The Bailiff's court is an entertainment show attended daily by an enchanted audience from the Camp. During the day covered by The Childermass the Bailiff hears and disposes of only a few of the petitioners' cases, for he is cut off by an organized opposition, led by a rival crowd-master, Hyperides. Finally, as Satters and Pullman stand by, the trial breaks down into an acrimonious debate on the Bailiff's credentials as a judge of mankind. During this debate, the Bailiff reveals to Hyperides his plan to loosen his masters' control in Heaven. The book ends before either the contest or the Bailiff's scheme can be completed.

The narrative of The Childermass is divided roughly into two sections, the first relating Pullman and Satters's explorations, and the second the court procedures. A third section comprises the bulk of the debate. This final section is written in the form of a script for transmission or stage production:

BAILIFF. 'This is not a despotic legislature but it is also not a curia. However my personality is really the main factor in the whole thing, you need go no farther than me, I am your shepherd.'

A raging voice interrupts:  
'You are our butcher!'

BAILIFF. 'No, shepherd.'

VOICE. 'Butcher!'

BAILIFF. 'Shepherd!'

A VOICE. 'What's the difference?'7





With this sketch of the over-all movement of the book in mind, I shall examine in detail the environment of the dead and their overseer, the Bailiff. Out of my analysis of the landscape and players of the work I shall relate features of the fiction to some of Lewis's philosophical speculations from his major books written contemporaneously with The Childermass. All art, like science, Lewis wrote, is experimental in its fundamental nature. Each adjusts the life around it by 'an ascending seesaw of hypothesis,' in Lewis's phrase. "The inexhaustible material of life, as it comes along, suggests constantly a readjustment and a revision of what is there when it arrives."<sup>8</sup> Lewis stated that his aim in his speculative books was to throw into immediate relief the origins and implications of the obsessive ideas of his time. In The Art of Being Ruled (1926) and Time and Western Man (1927) his 'politics of the intellect'<sup>9</sup> was an attempt to preserve clear space for his threatened values. Lewis transposed many of these hypotheses into the fictional terms of The Childermass. Throughout the fantasy world of The Childermass and its sequels in The Human Age Lewis was testing possible revisions and readjustments of human conditions.

## Part II: The Landscape

'The Bailiff discussed it a week or two since. He said it had a different significance here — there's no occasion to be alarmed I mean you needn't fancy your reason's going. — You haven't got any.'<sup>10</sup>

### A: The Shape of the Plain

In the long descriptive opening of The Childermass the narrator, detached from the scene, takes a physical fix on the landscape. The landscape is projected spatially in three dimensions as if in the perspective drawings of machines or in the representation of crystalline



forms in space. From the red crest of the rim of nummulitic limestone behind the Camp, the city is seen "as though in an isometric plan."<sup>11</sup> The Magnetic City lies in an oasis-plain, fringed to the north with crystalline mountains and circled with the limestone ridge. Beyond the plain lies the desert shifted constantly by the wind, but to the north the alluvial bench has gained on the wall of the dunes. The walls of the city, a double row of battlements buttressed and splayed at the top "like the biretta of a roman priest," are again explicitly described in an identifiable perspective. "As they recede they withdraw from the shore of the river." The city within is a concentration of massed shapes:

The sheer profile of the city is intricate and uneven. Above the walls appears, naissant, armorial, and unreal, a high-hatched outcropping of huddled balconies, black rufous brown vermilion and white; the upper stages of wicker towers; helmet-like hoods of tinted stucco; tamarisks; the smaragdine and olive of tropical vegetations; tinselled banners; gigantic grey sea-green and speckled cones, rising like truncated eggs from a system of profuse nests; and a florid zoological symbolism — reptilian heads of painted wood, filled-out tinfoil or alloy, that strike round beneath the gusts of wind, and pigs made of inflated skins, in flight, bumped and tossed by serpents, among the pennants and embossed banners. The severe crests of bulky ziggurats rise here and there above this charivari of roof-life, perceived beyond and between the protecting walls.<sup>12</sup>

The crystalline form of the mountains and the massed limestone of the bench girdling the plain contrast with the shapelessness of the Camp. "Like black drops falling into a cistern these slow but incessant forms feed the camp to overflowing." Although they are within sight of the citadel, "rising plumb from the water, a crown of silver rock,"<sup>13</sup> the inhabitants of the Camp exist precariously on a tract of mist and dust:

Their feet sink into the exuviae and migrating sand, dust and gypsum, of the riverside, kicking, first one and then the other, a stone or fragment or jetsam of the camp or flood, Pullman outwards toward the shore, Satters inland campwards.<sup>14</sup>



The day breaks upon the hot waves and exhausted movements of the Camp, to "the accompaniment of innumerable lowing horns along the banks of the river, a chorus of mournful messages."<sup>15</sup>

The nerveless accumulation of the souls in the night-camp is reinforced by the slow motion of the work gangs along the banks of the river. As Pullman looks on, a crowded punt makes ashore and disgorges its load of workers. "A band of swarthy peons disembark, carrying picks and spades. They enter a box-shaped skip, their backs forming a top-heavy wall above its sides. It begins moving inland upon its toy track."<sup>16</sup> The peons' torpor is brutally shattered by the braying of a donkey. Once the disturbance ends, the workers relapse into their machine-like efficiency:

One holds by the bridle an ass, which trumpets with sedate hysteria. Electrified at each brazen blare, its attendant stiffens. He is shaken out of an attitude to which on each occasion he returns, throwing him into a gaunt runway perspective, that of a master-acrobat tilted statuesquely at an angle of forty-five degrees from the upright awaiting the onset of the swarming troupe destined for his head and shoulders. SHAM 101 is painted in letters of garnet-red upon the hull of the fly-boat. An ape crouches, chained, its hand on the tiller.<sup>17</sup>

The river provides the means of passage for the working parties of peons coming from the City, for the Bailiff coming to set up his court on the Camp shore, and for the successful petitioners to escape to the celestial port. As Pullman explains it, the water is "time-stuff" and the waves are years.<sup>18</sup> It is a river which can be willed nearer or further away, a mental reality only, like the willed self-cures of Dr. Coué. "'Just wish frantically for the river with all your might and main! Set your teeth and say to yourself "Every moment and in every respect I get nearer and nearer to the river!"'"<sup>19</sup> As a mental phenomenon in the exhausted minds of the inhabitants of the Camp, the river has only a tenuous reality. It is discontinuous, an intermittent series





of sensations. "In thin clockwork cadence the exhausted splash of the waves is a sound that is a cold ribbon just existing in the massive heat. The delicate surf falls with the abrupt crash of glass, section by section."<sup>20</sup>

A trumpet blares out at unexpected intervals over the Camp. There is a constant rumble of hammerings under the celestial soil, rising to a deafening crescendo at times. Beyond the westward margin of the ridge lies a region of ominous pounding. "A heavy murmur resembling the rolling of ritualistic drums shakes the atmosphere. It is the outposts or investing belt of Beelzebub, threatening Heaven from that direction, but at a distance of a hundred leagues, composed of his resonant subjects." Again, to the east "the 'pulse of Asia' never ceases beating."<sup>21</sup>

These drumming sounds and hammerings are ubiquitous. Traversing a compartment of Seventeenth Century Space-Time, Satters and Pullman summon up a ritualistic confrontation between masculine matrons and matronly papas. "With savage appeals from its stage tom-toms," the father versus son motif is raised; and the fathers turn tail. The new, feminized fathers applaud the rout as one man, "community singing the national anthem of the New Babel jazzed."<sup>22</sup> As these sounds subside a fresh battery of hollow thumping impresses itself upon the consciousness of Pullman and Satters:

The hammering proceeds, from underneath it sounds. The blows become as expressive as the midnight blowings of a shunting goods-locomotive, the reports subsiding to whispering taps then thudding up into increasingly loud blows suddenly, with thrilling echoes attached to form a long determined sound.<sup>23</sup>

The atmosphere is alive with electrical disturbances and smothering clouds of red dust.<sup>24</sup> These too build up into violent storms that





galvanize the Camp:

Thunder and lightning explode from a dense red cloud overhead. It has grown dark. There is a guttural roll followed by dizzy crashes. A violet-white blaze vividly whitewashes everything about them, turning it into a momentary electric world, that starts out and then vanishes. The atmosphere is suddenly chilled; large gobs of frigid rain dash into their faces, smashing or glancing off.

'That's meant for us!' says Pullman, turning up his coat collar and hastening along.

Satters clings to his arm, alarmed and speechless. There is a great defiant roll of shattering intensity, and an immense instantaneous pomp of the most spotless snowy light. Their hands mechanically fly as shields to their eyes, they stand heads down, Satters shuddering against Pullman.

The storm stops.<sup>25</sup>

The bank of the river is always deserted, except for the peons.

Their eyes, dull like the discoloured stones underfoot, and their leaden movements mark them as creatures undergoing the final transmutation from organic to inorganic matter. The peons are 'all thumbs,' Pullman observes; and they are articulated with the stiffest joints, so that their movements are awkward and leaden. "'Yes the hands put on weight here. The feet too!'"<sup>26</sup> Ferried across the river and massed into box-cars, the peons vanish inland like a consignment of coffins. Later, as Pullman and Satters explore these regions inland they come upon plots of desert, each with its own glittering, peculiar solitary sun. In them are massed large 'lozenge-shaped' rocks which are lying with their axes pointing towards the Magnetic City.<sup>27</sup> The lozenges look to Pullman as if they had crowded together to escape the hot blasts of the sun:

He looks round at the untidy field of fossils, as they all seem. 'It looks as though some one had been here with a pot of red paint. That's oxide of iron. In the Highlands the shepherds use the hematic pigment ground down from the iron ore to mark their sheep.'

He looks down at his feet:

'There may be chalybeate springs here, even, the place is very red.'

He looks directly at Satters, smiling.

'Nature is fond of red!'<sup>28</sup>



Satters ignores Pullman's explanation of the rubble of concretionary sandstone before them. He examines the stones with his eye and hand before his mind drifts away from the scene. "'Are those the bones of animals? They must be pretty big, if they are,' he then asks at last." He strokes the back of one of the stones and removes his hand abruptly, for the stone is very hot.

Satters' attention escapes in passionate yawns but he affects to shudder as he imagines the vigorous temperatures required to segmentate all this concrete or whatever he said with the oxhide was it, red and green. Rather pretty!<sup>29</sup>

Pullman later concedes that the Time-flats should be kept off-limits, for "if everybody made a habit of wandering about they'd have to spend half their time looking for lost sheep."<sup>30</sup>

The stone-coloured peons merging into the landscape manifest one type of extinction. Like the Marcus-crowd at the bazaar, with eyes of verdigris, and like Pullman himself lapsing out of consciousness with "a face like a clay doll,"<sup>31</sup> they are in the process of assimilation into the environment. The Bailiff's joke invites extension; the Camp is experiencing its 'posthumous, post-human' and post-humus life.<sup>32</sup> The peons do not know they exist. Their physical presence is as indistinct as a faded photograph. Encountering these slowly stalking peons on the bank Satters responds to their pathos:

The images take on for him abruptly a menacing distinctness; the monotonous breathing of the group turns into a heave that with a person would be a sigh; all this collection are inflated with a breath of unexpected sadness; a darker shade rushes into the pigments, as it were, of them, like a wind springing up in their immaterial passionless trances, whistling upon their lips, at some order, denying them more repose — since they have a life after their fashion, however faded; and a thrill of dismay responds in Satters, the spell lifts, he presses against Pullman, forcing him off the track in panic.<sup>33</sup>

Pullman is not moved by the peons. He finds them an inconvenience which can be obliterated eventually by studious inattention. Pullman has



them fixed in a formula, which he repeats automatically. "'What they say about them is that they are the masses of personalities whom God, having created them, is unable to destroy, but who are not distinct enough to remain more than what you see. Indistinct ideas don't you know,' he adds loftily."<sup>34</sup>

The atmosphere of the Camp is not only a scene of transformations but also a theatre of instantaneous extinction. Those marked for death, like the peons, are described as insects. Satters's nostalgia for the human dimension alerts Pullman to the danger. "'I think you must be what the Bailiff once described as a natural bug. --He means spook of course."<sup>35</sup> For all these ephemera in the Camp, death is automatic and swift:

Occasionally upon a long-winded blast the frittered corpse of a mosquito may be borne. As it strikes the heavenly soil a small sanguine flame bursts up, and is consumed or rescued. A dark ganglion of the bodies of anopheles, mayflies, locusts, ephemerids, will sometimes be hurled down upon the road; a whiff of plague and splenic fever, the diabolical flame, and the nodal obscenity is gone.<sup>36</sup>

As concretions and nummulitic limestone they resolve into the tertiary stratum of the setting, the Cainozoic.

### B: Shadows of the War

The experience of World War I has shaped the imaginative conception of The Childermass. The long sweeps of description over the Brobdingnagian and Lilliputian landscapes during Satters and Pullman's time travels are like the Zeppelin observations Lewis described in Blasting and Bombardiering.<sup>37</sup> The narrator's eye, from its vantage point above the action, "brackets" the figures in the interfaces between the time zones. Again, in a painting like his Plan of War, exhibited in 1915, Lewis seems to take an aerial perspective for his abstracted





front Line. Both Pullman and Satters had fought in the Line without meeting each other. Satters, a sham hero in frogged mess-jacket and Mons Star, is still haunted by memories of the War. The storms breaking over the Camp remind him of the artillery bombardments, and he speaks habitually in the language of the trench campaigns.<sup>38</sup> "'Tell me if I bore you too dreadfully—do you live in a hut or a dug-out? I think the camp's beastly unhealthy.—There are six others in my dug-out without me, I never see them except when I turn in, then we never say anything none of them have much to say ever.'" <sup>39</sup> Even the silence of the empty spaces around the Camp recalls war-time. "Satters' heavy foot-falls on the macadam echo like steps in a deserted drill-hall."<sup>40</sup> Satters is especially fearful of nights alone in the Camp, and he recoils at the appearance of the ghostly peons:

Satters hangs back his body a frightened and shrinking herd of muscles, forced on from without by masterful Miss Pullman towards these condensations of the red dusty fog—to the frightened war-time soul of the startled Satters, angels of Mons, devils of Mons, enemies, ghosts of battle.<sup>41</sup>

Lewis describes Satters's 'ghosts of battle' as mental phenomena with the indistinct visual quality of brittle, yellowing photographs:

One figure is fainter than any of the rest, he is a thin and shabby mustard yellow, in colouring a flat daguerreotype or one of the personnel of a pre-war film, split tarnished and transparent from travel and barter. He comes and goes; sometimes he is there, then he flickers out. He is a tall man of no occupation, in the foreground. He falls like a yellow smear upon one much firmer than himself behind, or invades him like a rusty putrefaction, but never blots out the stronger person.<sup>42</sup>

These spectres and the distress of Satters who confronts them recall the mood of much of the literature of the War. Satters's strained and sweaty encounter with the peons evokes the tense atmosphere of a poem like Wilfred Owen's "Strange Meeting." Again, we recall Siegfried Sassoon's writing to Robert Graves when he was home recovering from



wounds sustained at the Front, that he could see corpses all over the streets of London as he went on his daily walks.<sup>43</sup> The disturbed sensibility of a generation found expression in England in an anxious interest in spiritualism. In "The Burial of the Dead" in The Waste Land T.S. Eliot juxtaposes the predictions of the clairvoyante Madame Sosostris with an encounter in the streets of London:

Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,  
 And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.  
 Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,  
 To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours  
 With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine.  
 There I saw one I knew, and stopped him, crying: "Stetson!"  
 "You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!"  
 "That corpse you planted last year in your garden,"  
 "Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?"  
 "Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?"

Again, in "A Game of Chess," two lovers cannot reach each other, separated by ghosts from the past:

"I never know what you are thinking. Think."

I think we are in rats' alley  
 Where the dead men lost their bones.

"What is that noise?"

The wind under the door.

"What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?"

Nothing again nothing.

Even the playgrounds of the Bailiff's court are marked with traces of the War. When the Bailiff calls for an intermission from the court's business, the crowd breaks up into gossiping groups and dancing couples. "Pullman executes an old-fashioned shimmy, his stick wagging beneath his arm, in front of the drooping and protesting Satters. Nestling couples line the base of the wall outside. Several are picnicking in little pits like ancient shell-holes beyond the semi-circular promenade."<sup>44</sup>



Both the landscape and its inhabitants mirror distinctive features of the War. Some individuals in the Camp, like Satters not yet desensitized, show the traumatic signs of shell-shock. Concomitantly, the crowds gathered around the Bailiff are held together in suggestible blocs by the technological devices of propaganda, cinema, and the wireless. Historians of the aftermath of World War I have shown that under pressure of the War a new collectivist society was born in England. Simultaneously the new technologies of cinema and wireless were expanding and becoming increasingly sophisticated. They were to reinforce the process of social reorganization in the post-war years.<sup>45</sup>

As an artillery officer during the early years of the War, Lewis was required to establish observation posts to direct his company's shelling after the Line advanced or fell back. In one vivid passage from his autobiography of 1939, Blasting and Bombardiering, he described his experience scouting out the No Man's Land between the British and German lines. It is a landscape whose features suggest the outer zones of the night-camp in The Childermass:

Now we were in the heart of this sinister little desert. Despite the angry hammering from the world of batteries we had left, and that from the world of batteries whose frontiers lay not so far ahead, but still not near enough to sound very loud—in spite of that agitated framework to our "mystery land," nothing could have been more solitary. I should not have been surprised to see an Atlas vulture or some desiccated African goat. For it was definitely a red desert, more African than lunar in appearance.

. . . . .  
This is a museum of sensations, not a collection of objects. For your reconstruction you would have to admit Death there as well. . . . You would have to line the trenches with bodies guaranteed freshly killed that morning. No hospital could provide it. And unless people were mad they would not want—apart from the cost—to assemble the necessary ordnance, the engines required for this stunt landscape-gardening. — Except that they were mad, they would not have wanted ever to assemble it.

To obtain this parched, hollow, breathless desert you have to postulate madmen. —It was the hollow centre of a madman's dream we had got into. As our feet struck the ground they seemed to be echoing faintly from end to end of this mysterious place of death.<sup>46</sup>





Like Lewis, Paul Nash was commissioned late in the War to paint a section of the Front. His description of the landscape in a letter to his mother reinforces the impression the face of trench warfare made on its artists and observers:

Sunset and sunrise are blasphemous, they are mockeries to man, only the black rain out of the bruised and swollen clouds all through the bitter black of night is fit atmosphere in such a land. The rain drives on, the stinking mud becomes more evilly yellow, the shell holes fill up with green-white water, the roads and tracks are covered in inches of slime, the black dying trees ooze and sweat and the shells never cease. They alone plunge overhead, tearing away the rotting tree stumps, breaking the plank roads, striking down horses and mules, annihilating, maiming, maddening, they plunge into the grave which is this land; one huge grave, and cast up on it the poor dead.<sup>47</sup>

When Lewis republished parts of his 1914 magazine Blast in his 1939 autobiography Blasting and Bombardiering he recreated first-hand impressions of the hysteria of the first days of the War. Through the notes of his 'fictional diarist' Cantelman, Lewis charted the progress of British mobilization. "The 'great historical event' is always hatching; the Crowd in its habitual infantile sleep. Then the appointed hand releases the clutch, the 'great event' is set in motion: the crowd rises to meet the crash half awake and struggling with voluptuous spasms. It is the Rape of the Crowd."<sup>48</sup> Cantelman plunges into the midst of the crowds gathering in London at the Declaration of War. "A fine dust of extinction, a grain or two for each man, is scattered in any crowd like these black London war-crowds. Their pace is so mournful. Wars begin with this huge indefinite interment in the cities." Cantelman begins his crowd experiments at once, stopping for close observations where the war-crowd seems densest and stupidest:

He allowed himself to be carried by the crowd. He offered himself to its emotion, which saturated him at length. When it had sunk in, he examined it. Apparently it was sluggish electricity. That was all. As such it had no great meaning, beyond what the power of a great body of water has, for instance. It conducted nowhere: it had been disposed





no doubt by skillful brains: they might be admirable. But not the electricity.<sup>49</sup>

In 1927, in his analyses of the connections between the dynamic theories of the Time philosophers, the Sorelian syndics, and the Italian Futurists, Lewis again recalled the War. Here he was discussing the popular counters of 'action' and 'life.' ". . .even today, in their unfathomable conservatism, there are still masses of people who continue to think as though the War had never occurred, and still fall into these by now time-honoured traps, labelled for the unwary 'action' and 'life'—traps that are nevertheless choked with millions of corpses."<sup>50</sup>

Through the 1920's and 1930's many of Lewis's books and paintings drew on his experience in the Great War not only as history, but, as in Blasting and Bombardiering poised on the edge of the next Great War, as a warning. The War had exhausted the world, and while it was recovering, Lewis wrote, a false world came temporarily to take its place. "But now the real is recovering its strength. Beneath the pressure of this convalescent vitality our cardboard make-believe is beginning to crack and tumble down." A fresh look at reality through the cracks of post-war decay might revitalize human awareness, Lewis wrote:

As we are in this superb and novel time, able to look at a fact in the face, at last, because the war-sickness (the 'post-war') is over—as no one any longer can pretend to be shell-shocked because he'd have been dead long ago if he had been—we can look back at the War with fresh eyes. If we don't learn a thing or two from this scrutiny it will be our fault entirely.<sup>51</sup>

### C: The Magnetic City

During their "period of enforced idleness" in the Bailiff's "treacherous health-resort,"<sup>52</sup> the appellants can only speculate on the nature of their goal. "Suitors for the coveted citizenship"<sup>53</sup> of a city they can only intermittently see, they are drawn by the Bailiff's promise



of the future. The magnetic pull keeps them securely in their place, as Pullman explains to Satters:

'The centre of the camp's the best place for the real stay-at-home the nearer the better. The magnetism out here again requires stamina of a particular sort; at bottom it's electricity all the way through magnetic and electric, this is all nothing but that—some gold-digger started it to popularize the outskirts.'<sup>54</sup>

Hyperides, who has twice escaped the City according to the Bailiff's account, inveighs against its powerful control of the masses camped on the plain. He damns the Bailiff's confederation with the "abominable capitol with a world-monopoly to turn spirit into matter and farm Death."<sup>55</sup> However, the City's magic is still secret:

'Here you stand surrounded by armed bodyguards. Your storm-clouds sail up and down above us in our prison camp but rather ineffectively with their tired electricity flash round our heads and sometimes scorch our coat-tails. Individually, that is in the flesh and to talk to, you do not seem very powerful; yet a pull somewhere in a very high or it may be very low place you certainly seem to possess and you come in and out of that unpopulated-looking place that confronts us yonder and you appear to have bought or stolen the secret of our fate and you hold the necessary sanctions to farm us. What are we and what are you? What do you do with us when we pass across that water? What is that place over there?'<sup>56</sup>

The anomalous status of the Magnetic City is implied for the reader by its physical resemblance to both Bunyan's celestial City and Dante's Hell. In the opposition between these analogues we recognize the mystery of the City. The outer reaches of the Magnetic City and of its suburban Camp are like the lands on the way to the Golden City which drew Christian away from his home. The gate to Bunyan's City is visible from the Delectable Mountains, and a belt of Enchanted Ground lies between the pilgrims and the land of Beulah with its river crossing to Heaven. Shepherds warn the pilgrims of the nets laid by the guardian of the region of Enchanted Ground, a black man clothed in white who leads the unwary pilgrims astray. "It is the Flatterer, a false apostle, that



hath transformed himself into an angel of light."<sup>57</sup> The Enchanted Ground is itself a region of false comforts, where lethargy and sleep bring death:

Stand — Fast. 'Why, we are, as you see, upon the Enchanted Ground; and as I was coming along, I was musing with myself of what a dangerous road the road in this place was, and how many that had come even thus far on pilgrimage had here been stopped and been destroyed. I thought also of the manner of the death with which this place destroyeth men. Those that die here die of no violent distemper. The death which such dies is not grievous to them; for he that goeth away in a sleep, begins that journey with desire and pleasure; yea, such acquiescence in the will of that disease.<sup>58</sup>

Another denizen of this region is the uxorious Madame Bubble, a smooth talking commender of the material world and its benefits. "This is she that maintaineth in their splendour all those that are the enemies of pilgrims. Yea, this is she that hath bought off many a man from a pilgrim's life."<sup>59</sup>

The spiritual traps laid for Bunyan's pilgrims in their quest for the Celestial City resemble those to which the appellants in The Childermass are subject. The important difference is of course that none of the Bailiff's promises of a glorious reward come to fruition. The Bailiff explains that the Camp must suffer, but Pullman observes that suffering is the sole experience held out for the petitioners:

'Suffering—suffering is the secret! He wants us all to feel as much as we conveniently can or at any rate on no account entirely to lose our capacity for acute and disagreeable sensation—also agreeable but that is secondary as all the most agreeable sensations are based upon pain in any case as he remarks.'<sup>60</sup>

Bunyan's pilgrims by contrast eventually attain their goal, and they are rewarded with the sounds, sights, and smells of Paradise:

There came out also at this time to meet them several of the King's trumpeters, clothed in white and shining raiment, who with melodious noises and loud, made even the heavens to echo with their sound. These trumpeters saluted Christian and his fellow with ten thousand welcomes from the world; and this they did with shouting and sound of trumpet.

. . . . .





In this place the children of the town would go into the King's gardens and gather nosegays for the pilgrim, and bring them to them with much affection. Here also grew 'camphire, with spikenard, and saffron, calamus, and cinnamon, with all its trees of frankincense, myrrh, and aloes, with all chief spices.'<sup>61</sup>

The petitioners in the Bailiff's camp endure a continual parody of these promises. "'This is camphire; have you seen it before here? That's its book-name. It has some other. Bible camphire, you know. It has a rather jolly smell. They use it in the camp, ground in hot water, to dye their beards and moustaches.'"<sup>62</sup> Stunned by the blare of trumpets or sunk into a stupor, the appellants are passive witnesses to rituals dimly suggestive of significance. As the moulting phoenix jerkily lays down its basket on the basalt slab at the edge of the Bailiff's court, "a perfume of frankincense myrrh spikenard and balsam drifts back from it and from its burden."<sup>63</sup>

Dante's upper Hell is the region reserved for those guilty of the sins of the Leopard, the uncontrolled appetites: the lustful, gluttonous, hoarders, spendthrifts, and the wrathful. It includes the so-called Vestibule or Ante-chamber of Hell, where the sinners are guilty of a refusal to choose. Theirs is a failure of the intellect, and they pursue a meaningless banner through the aimless whirling flux of a timeless limbo:

So I beheld, and lo! an ensign borne  
Whirling, that span and ran, as in disdain  
Of any rest; and there the folk forlorn

Rushed after it, in such an endless train,  
It would never have entered in my head  
There were so many men whom death had slain.

And when I'd noted here and there a shade  
Whose face I knew, I saw and recognized  
The coward spirit of the man who made

The great refusal; and that proof sufficed;  
Here was that rabble, here without a doubt,  
Whom God and whom His enemies despised.



This scum, who'd never lived, now fled about  
Naked and goaded. . . . (III. 52-65)

The whole Camp charlestoning and primping under the Bailiff's command demonstrate an insatiable appetite for the sensations of sex and action. As the Bailiff explains to Hyperides, the crowd-masters need these frail subjects. "'Nothing would ever happen here if we had not those raw propensities of the offending Adam to fall back upon--you can pick which you choose to revolve the merry-go-round and grind out the tune.'"64 We recall here too Pullman's definition of the peons: "'...they are the masses of personalities whom God, having created them, is unable to destroy. . . .'"

The Childermass is a grotesque transmutation of many of the conventions of the literature and legends of death. The trumpet that announces the arrival of the Bailiff at the seat of judgement shatters the stillness like the braying of the peons' donkey:

A trumpet-note, an obscene grating vibration, stopping as though a furious hand had been slapped down abruptly upon its mouth, strikes them. An insult from nowhere, a cough of disgusted scorn from some stray functional divinity ambushed in the ether: Satters starts, they both look up at the city, stopping.<sup>65</sup>

An ape chained to the tiller of the fly-boat SHAM 101 ferries the dead across this filthy Styx of Time-stuff. "'Hunamans or hanumans they call them: funny name, isn't it, like houyhnhnms! It's hindu I believe, it's an Ape-god. They are the mascots of the river-crossing.'"66 The dead man's double 'Ka Pullman'<sup>67</sup> is not the companion to the dead soul, as in Egyptian mythology, but a lost automaton merely. The Samaritan in the Bailiff's court is his chief headsman, Mannaiei, administrator of death and torture:

Mannaiei returns with sullen strut to his position to the left of the magistrate, wiping the blade of his cutlass upon the skirt of his canvas vest. His eyes are rolled up in a dizzy ecstasy, giving a sluggish sickly cast to his face.<sup>68</sup>



Pullman speculates that the Bailiff teaches his own kind of palingenesis and that the time spent in Camp is a kind of purgatorial experience. Although he cannot think the Bailiff would regard his charges as behaviourist machines, "addressed to a static millennium of suffering for purposes of purification, our life staged in some such wilderness as that fixed by pagan thought outside the blessed spheres and the earthly as well,"<sup>69</sup> still Pullman cannot imagine any other explanation for their position. According to the Bailiff's address, the souls are "received into the corpus of the mother Church" by a sort of "rectal feeding." (Most human personalities would be immediately vomitted out if the paradisal body's normal reflexive stomach muscles came into play.) "This administration over which I preside is from that point of view a sort of nutrient enema--you might say we are the funnel." This reduction to the cloacal need disturb no one, however; for the Bailiff continues his analysis amid the rapturous applause of his audience:

'But although that small postern you see yonder serves to symbolize the passage out of an organic system into an inorganic life, it is nevertheless an entrance, as well as, or even rather than, an exit. Men have their exits and entrances: but the son of man hath not and so forth and so forth my poor children, there it is and so forth and so forth. Salvation signifies the termination for those saved of that state of affairs.'

Pullman finds the Bailiff's eschatology very difficult to get hold of, but it is at base a scatology. The Bailiff's 'last things' begin and end with the sullen mass like black drops accumulating in a cistern as they arrive in Camp "completely transformed, cooked in this posthumous odyssey." The Bailiff comments with unaccustomed defensiveness upon this point:





'Heaven is not, I need hardly say, a drainage system into which you drop but a system of orthodox post-humous--if you will excuse the pun, post-human life.'

(At the word 'pun' there is an immediate facetious response.)<sup>70</sup>

The Bailiff's function is to sustain this cloacal body with promises and entertainments. Macrob recognizes the Bailiff's parasitic extractions of the creative principle from all his charges. "'This static degradation is the opposite, even, of the becoming to which you are so partial. Or is it the dregs of your becoming that we are asked now for ever to lap up?'"<sup>71</sup>

The symbols painted on the Bailiff's booth suggest that judgement has already been passed on most of the petitioners collecting in their supposed Purgatory. "At the common centre of the two triangles a conventional eye has been painted. This is the symbol of the Maha-Yuga, but it has in addition to the horns the representation of a goat-hoof beneath." The combination of the image of the fourfold decline of the world taken from Indian myth and the goat hoof from the Judgement in Corinthians foretells the Bailiff's sentence. Other appointments of the court reinforce this theme, like the winnowing fan wielded by an attendant for the Bailiff's greater comfort in the daily heat. "(This is emblematic as well of the justiciary dividing chaff from grain. . . .)" It reminds the devout at court of a flyswatter. The Bailiff's tribunal is not so much a discrimination among values as a ritual entertainment: Notwithstanding the pretentious symbolic devices of the appointments of this court, it is the nature only of an African bentang or rough moot, deliberately provincial and primitive. Directed to the adjusting of the niceties of salvation, this administrative unit yet displays the untidiness and fatigue of a secular community. An hysteria is noticed to sweep over it whenever its routine is disturbed.<sup>72</sup>

Satters, distressed at the prospect of an extended existence under these unpleasant conditions, yearns for a release in death. But





an immediate release through death is becoming increasingly rare in the Bailiff's domain. In the early days, as the Bailiff reminisces, a larger proportion of the appellants "was draughted to death into the ranks of the peons."<sup>73</sup> The people then had been 'perfect brutes' and the air was black with the dust and cinders of an enormous eruption. At present, the Camp is populated densely and the amphitheatre for the Bailiff's tribunal is always well filled. The Bailiff is dead against the ataraxia of Epicurus, for he induces by turns periods of anxiety and excitement in the lives of the petitioners. "'The idea of the anaesthesia of death he says revolts him.'"<sup>74</sup> Swollen with increasing numbers of waiting appellants, the Camp has nevertheless become much more attractive in recent history. The Bailiff has ringed it with mountains and a volcano imported from Iceland. "'Meantime the place does really look like something—we've got a mountain range in the distance and things generally have quite a normal appearance; they look all right, anyhow, even if on closer inspection they still leave much to be desired and that's half the battle, my tempting little titters!'"<sup>75</sup>

#### D: The Outer Regions: Space-Time

BAILIFF (wailing loudly above the wind). 'We are factors of Time factors of Time! and you must remember besides what we are—that we are only pretences, you and I; our blood is the death-dew of the Mystical Moon that the sun sucks up and leaves dry, our bodies are just common-or-garden passages or reflections, at the most we are made out of the excrements of the substantial stuff of Time, we are phantoms oh! my little nanspits we are ghostie-ghostie-ghosties!'"<sup>76</sup>

Satters, following close on Pullman's track, is a child encountering the heady new sensations of travels in Space-Time. As soon as his attention is distracted from the peons he is surprised to find they have disappeared. "The peons become a part of the sodden unsteady phantasm of the past on the spot. In the course of a minute they have



convulsively faded."<sup>77</sup> In these disordered compartments beyond the Camp Pullman and Satters at first are passive observers in the plastic environment:

The scene is steadily redistributed, vamped from position to position intermittently at its boundaries. It revolves upon itself in a slow material maelstrom. Satters sickly clings to his strapping little champion: sounds rise on all hands like the sharp screech of ripping calico, the piercing alto of the slate-pencil, or the bassooning of imposing masses, frictioning each other as they slowly turn in concerted circles.<sup>78</sup>

However, their experience in the bazaar, which Pullman calls 'the city of the dead,'<sup>79</sup> reinforces a sense of menace. The time tourists enter a covered market like a tunnel, in which there are intersecting cliffs of sunlight dropping plumb into the black aisles of the pedestrian passages:

These solid luminous slices have the consistence of smoked glass: apparitions gradually take shape in their substance, hesitate or arrive with fixity, become delicately plastic, increase their size, burst out of the wall like an inky exploding chrysalid, scuttling past the two schoolboys: nearsighted or dazzled, in a busy rush they often collide. Or figures at their side plunge into the glassy surface of the light. As they do so they are metamorphosed from black disquieting figures of mysterious Orientals (hangers-on or lotus-eating Arabian merchants) into transparent angelic presences, which fade slowly in the material of the milky wall.<sup>80</sup>

As Satters and Pullman withdraw to safety beneath the overhang of the shop-awnings, Satters reaches out to touch the edge of the light. He finds it hard, more like marble — a cutting edge.

They drop out of this compartment almost as unexpectedly as they had entered it. "The strangeness of the abrupt readjustment is overcome almost immediately. Then at once the present drives out everything except itself, so that inside a minute it for him is the real."<sup>81</sup>

The new and alien world of Satters and Pullman's explorations is Lewis's physical representation of Bergson's theoretical concept of la durée. For purposes of examination, Lewis has created a portrait, life-sized, of Bergson's sensational and discontinuous mental phantom world



of Space-Time. Lewis had analyzed the features of this theoretical world in Time and Western Man:

The intensity, nakedness, reality of the immediate sensation, even though it gives you no ideal whole, though it is dogmatically a creature of the moment, even though it gives you the 'objects' of life only as strictly experienced in Time; evanescent, flashing and momentary; not even existing outside of their proper time, ideally having no prolongations in memory, confined to the 'continuous present' of their temporal appearance: consumed (and immediately evacuated) as 'events': one with action, incompatible with reflection, impossible of contemplation — the sensation (in spite of these peculiarities) is nevertheless, is it not? the real thing.<sup>82</sup>

All of these features of a specious reality located in discontinuous sensation are reviewed and embodied in the continuous present of the narrative in The Childermass.

A series of two-dimensional hallucinations, like photographs, demonstrates the deadness of a reality made discontinuous. Life is suspended in the frozen compartments of time through which Satters and Pullman pass. "Pullman. . . examines a cow, its head thrust up into the sharp network of the offside hedge, the shuttle of its underlip having reached the left-hand extremity of its oscillation, grotesquely protruding, like an organ that had slipped."<sup>83</sup> Satters succumbs at once to lethargy among the inert phantoms of a recreated Seventeenth Century scene. He would become rooted in this still setting if Pullman did not keep him awake and moving. "'It's pure imagination—tell yourself that at once. It's through seeing all these people entranced all around you, the stillness of everything and so forth, it's pure auto-suggestion.'"<sup>84</sup>

Pullman has an explanation for the mechanism of this shadow reality and for his own fragmented identity. He relates to Satters an anecdote about Tyndall's experiments with Leyden jars. Accidentally allowing the condenser to discharge a jolt of electric current through his body, Tyndall felt that his mind and his body were divided. His





mind grasped immediately that all was well and he so assured his audience, but his eyes continued meanwhile to signal quite irrationally that his body was in fragments. Pullman keeps telling this story in Camp, for he feels it holds the key to his peculiar condition:

'Shall I tell you my reasoning? I said: Tyndall when he was addressing the audience was really disembodied. He had no body at that moment, only bits. He spoke from memory of the normal situation. Do you see the train of thought or not? On the physical side we are, at present, memories of ourselves. Do you get that? We are in fragments, as it were, or anything that you like. We are not normal, are we? No. Conscious—we are conscious, though. So there you have a sufficient parallel. We behave as we do from memory, that's the idea. We go one better than Tyndall: we put the thing together in its sensational completeness. We behave as though we were now what we used to be, in life.'<sup>85</sup>

Arriving at the end of the system of convex mirrors leading to the Bailiff's world, Satters and Pullman are arrangements of themselves recovered from their memories of life on earth. They and the environments through which they move have been transformed from spatially-realized things into temporally-multiple patterns. Lewis discussed the theoretical basis of this world in Time and Western Man:

In place of the characteristic static 'form' of greek Philosophy, you have a series, a group, or, as Professor Whitehead says, a reiteration. In place of a 'form' you have a 'formation' — as it is characteristically called — a repetition of a particular shape; you have a battalion of forms in place of one form. In your turn, 'you' become the series of your temporal repetitions; you are no longer a centralized self, but a spun-out, strung-along series, a pattern-of-a-self, depending like the musical compositions upon time; an object too, always in the making, who are your states. So you are a history: there can be no Present for you. You are an historical object, since your mental life has been as it were objectified.<sup>86</sup>

Pullman at least enjoys the freedom and flux of time-travel. He delights in the plunges from one compartment into another and the sudden disappearances of seemingly real objects. "'It's unlike anything I felt in the old days—under terrestrial conditions,' he says. 'The sense of freedom one sometimes gets is perfectly staggering, outside.'" This



exhilaration and its significance first impressed themselves on Pullman at the Bailiff's marvellous joining of his broken eye-glasses. "'The Bailiff took them from me made a pass over them with his hand--like that--and returned them to me whole: séance tenant. It was my first miracle! You can imagine my feelings!'" Then, having got "the Bailiff-habit," Pullman thrilled to "the possibilities of this additional plasticity."<sup>87</sup>

After this first taste of the Bailiff's power, Pullman relishes the freedom of his Time-treks. He feels the romantic sensation of escaping the bounds of ordinary life. In his enthusiastic conversation with Satters, Pullman echoes the theme of the Romantic Apocalypse—eternal harvest and eternal spring at once:

'I delight in these Time-spaces, they are passages really. You don't often come across them like this. Reversibility is the proof that the stage of perfection has been reached in machine-construction—it's the same with us, in my opinion. Here we are going backwards aren't we? But in the case of men their perfection involves not only ability to reverse, but to be inverted too. . . .'<sup>88</sup>

In his Science and the Modern World A.N. Whitehead attempted to articulate a philosophy of nature which must concern itself with "change, value, eternal objects, endurance, and interfusion." Again, Whitehead defined reality in the same work as "a feeling for nature as exhibiting entwined prehensive unities, each suffused with the presences of others."<sup>89</sup> Lewis's analysis of Whitehead's discussion pointed up its derivation from the romantic imagination of Shelley. Citing Whitehead's comments on Shelley's poem 'The Cloud,' Lewis wrote that Professor Whitehead's philosophy demonstrated the orthodox popular insistence on change and time:

Under these circumstances it is not to be wondered at that it is change and interfusion that he stresses, as he says that Shelley does.

. . . . .



And that is, of course where Whitehead and all the school to which he belongs place their emphasis. It is a much more exasperated, mercurial form of the flux of Heraclitus.

This is one aspect of nature, says Whitehead. There is another, namely its opposite. Wordsworth, we are told, because he was born upon a hill, saw the other aspect of nature. He is the poet of endurance.<sup>90</sup>

Despite his initial romantic enthusiasm for his new freedom of action in Space-Time, Pullman becomes increasingly disillusioned by its two-dimensional façade. Passing between the Brobdingnagian compartment of Seventeenth Century still-life into a Lilliputian Eighteenth Century scene, Pullman observes that the new scene must be viewed the length of a hedge built in diminishing perspective. "The little figure stands uncertain and crestfallen. 'Why then are all these things so lifelike?' he asks, in a tone of injury. The complexion of the Time-scene is altered by the discovery of the device upon which it depends."<sup>91</sup> Extrapolated from the philosophical worlds of Bergson and Whitehead which Lewis described in Time and Western Man, the outer regions of the Camp are pictures perceived in flat succession. They are impressed on a crude and elementary optical receiver like the shutter of a camera:

And, further, these images or impressions are, as far as possible, naked and simple, direct, sensations, unassociated with any component of memory.

Now you will be in a position to approach more nearly to the contrast that it is essential to seize. It is a flat world, it is almost also a world of looking-glass images.<sup>92</sup>

Again, the random and unpredictable fluctuations of the time-scene disturb Pullman's equilibrium. In one sequence of rapid shuttles through time, the baby Satters is suddenly transformed into an old man while Pullman grows rapidly younger. Before they can readjust to this novel reversal of roles, Satters has changed again, to an angrily swaggering Bill-Sikes-Satters.

Satters' voice has become so coarse that it has turned out to be a sort of navvy the young gentleman is up against, he is blinded with hot impetuous indignation. Satters is a thing of the past. The time- and





class-scales in which they hang in reciprocal action are oscillating violently, as they rush up and down through neighbouring dimensions they sight each other only very imperfectly.

Before normalcy is restored, the new arrangements of Satters and Pullman break into violent fighting. A youthfully energized Pullman repudiates the reversal of roles, but he adopts a schoolboy stammer in an exchange with the senior Satters:

'Yes, on me, you old brute, you old sot, you disgusting old b-b-bully! How dare you p-p-pull me like that?'

'I pull you?' A shadowy grin comes up into Satters' old-time dour and dismal phiz. 'I'll pull you blast you, if pulling's what you want you upstart swank-pot!'

The great felled hulk of Satters behind him, "correct classical Keystone corpse of a Jack-the-Giantkiller comedy," Pullman rushes off fiercely.

But even this triumph of his unaccustomed passion is a swiftly-moving event that has passed by quickly:

His calm pulse announces his restoration to the normal personal mean of circumspect donnish Pullman, with the fading of his aggressive youthful fire the more stable youngish don, studious and alert, with somewhat scanty hair that blows in wisps of uncertain colour, returns, in seventy yards it has absolutely all evaporated, he is cooler than a hotbed of cucumbers.<sup>93</sup>

The arrival of the Bailiff's barge terminates Time-travel in the outlying regions of the Camp. But the motion of the barge itself is an indicator that the habits of Space-Time are diffused throughout the Bailiff's territory:

The two banks of oars form a fan on either side, resting upon the water. Then the fan is seen flashing in cadence, somnolently opening and shutting in the silence of the distance: next the massive hull is noticed, through the imperceptible eclipse of one of the rippling fans, to be moving. Its transit is as static a progress as that of the minute hand of a clock. It expands rather than advances.<sup>94</sup>

A comment from the chapter "Space and Time" in Time and Western Man extends our understanding both of the nature of this environment and of the type of creatures best equipped to negotiate it:





The manner in which birds and insects find their way to their destination, sometimes covering great distances, is apparently owing to the fact that for them there is no space, as we apprehend it, but an infinitely varied, thick, highly magnetized and coloured, medium, instead. Their world is not a world of distinct objects. It is an interpenetrating world of direct sensation. It is, in short, Mr. Bergson's world. It is not our hated geometric world, of one space. It is a mental, as it were an interior world, of palpitating movement visually indistinct, electrical; not all arranged on the principles of surface and lines; and it is without a 'void' at all.<sup>95</sup>

### Part III: The Figures

HYPERIDES. 'Your favourite appeal is through the excitements of sex, and I use war or sport in the same manner, is that it? But your behaviour conceals affinities with some higher principle, you imply, for which with the human material, you are unable to find an expression — your disappointment provokes you to go to the other extreme with it.'<sup>96</sup>

#### A: Pullman

The name Pullman is an index of his character. He is the active, directing principle in the combination with Satters. He knows some of the marked tracks around the Camp and he busies himself keeping his charge to them. "Meanwhile action is everything; to keep moving is the idea, this is his law of existence — to rattle along these beaten tracks. Has he not the golden secret, who knows as he does the right road to the proper place in record time, barring accidents?" Another name for the character James Pullman is 'the good ship Pulley,' which combines his mechanical function of keeping the flaccid Satters erect with his navigational function in the fluid environment of the Bailiff's Space-Time world:

Satters rolls over laughing. A great outbreak of hollow hammering, accompanied by an oscillation of the earth of the panorama, brings him staggering to his feet. Pullman, legs apart, his weather-eye pedantically open, hands stuck deep and fast in jacket-pockets, sways easily upon his quarter-deck of the good ship Time, and surveys his abject lieutenant zigzagging and next falling into an oak-bush.<sup>97</sup>



At one point in these travels, Pullman has left a naked Satters in a dark hut, "its floor littered with excrement, earth, and leaves." He sits down outside, prays and then looks up," his eyes. . .fixed upon the unpopulated architectures of the Magnetic City."<sup>98</sup> Pullman can only guess at his own place and that of Satters in the new order across the river, in an environment apparently "without human life, like a city after a tragic exodus."<sup>99</sup> When Satters at last comes out of the hut and joins him, his face fixed in the smile of Leonardo's St. John, he cannot speak. Satters's first intelligible utterance, emerging out of a string of animal sounds, is "Merde," the first word of Alfred Jarry's Ubu Roi. "'A very rudimentary remark!'" Pullman comments. "'It's a good thing to begin with something simple. It shows you're yourself again. . . .'" With Satters once more clothed and presentable, Pullman, "the prosaic Ariel"<sup>100</sup> gets under way again.

Pullman has been a school-master in life, and he carries over his pedantry into his relations with Satters, as for example in his constant niggling over Satters's diction. "'I suppose he's a frightful poseur,'" comments Satters about one of the appellants. Pullman replies, "'Don't use that word I meant to tell you before—only very stupid people use it. It's what my aunt calls me!'"<sup>101</sup> Slight and thin-haired, Pullman wears a suit of nondescript dark grey, "well cut and a little shabby. . .on the trunk and limbs of a child."<sup>102</sup> He wears spectacles and carries a swagger stick under his arm, sometimes using it as a pointer or holding it penwise in his fingers. In life he has been a Roman Catholic, but in the Camp he inclines toward the spectacular power of the Bailiff. Apart from a few temporary lapses, Pullman is master in turn of the baby Satters. Where Satters is flabby and maundering, Pullman is spare and



cryptic. He is Nurse Pullman, a tight little smart little governess, a schoolmaster, and dominie. He is an artist moulding the wet clay of Satters into a man, and he is Ariel with a baby Caliban.

Pullman learns during his time travels that he is an incomplete being without his Satters. When they are separated after a quarrel Pullman sets off alone, but he soon senses that part of him is missing. He takes a quick inventory of his equipment. His glasses are on his nose and his stick is safely tucked beneath his arm, "yet in the personal economy a vivid loss is registered. . . . What is this missing object really? he gropes through all his senses very fussed; continually his mind returns to the large staring uncouth hulk of his friend even Satters. . . ." Satters, the "big-bottomed, jolly cheeked knock-kneed baby," has become a necessary part of him like his clothing or the materials of an artist.<sup>103</sup> Having experienced this moment of epiphany, Pullman stays by Satters through the balance of The Childermass. As the Bailiff's show takes over, he and Satters lapse back as spectators in the scene.

#### B: Sattersthwaite

Sattersthwaite, Christian name unknown, is feminine, passive and heavy. He blends the newness of babyhood with the stagnant ripeness of vegetation:

As they are standing close together, Pullman becomes conscious of a pungent smell. It is the sticky vegetable odour of small babies in a close room, a distillation of the secretions and excrements of the earliest human life. It is Satters' smell, the new smell that Satters has. Taking him by the arm he feels the warmth of elastic animal matter in big thick-meated resistant layers beneath his fingers but his friend's face is fastened stupidly upon the gilded cock, a wide-eyed suckling. The wet cherry-mouth has burst open and displays its juicy fibres.<sup>104</sup>





Satters must continually practise the most rudimentary physical processes. Simply to keep from falling asleep, he must keep moving. His most characteristic position is that of an infant lolling on its back. Thus Pullman must coach him constantly in conscious activity. Once under way, Satters is uncoordinated like a child taking its first steps. "Satters flings his feet out, supposing each yard twice as spacious as it is. So for him his foot always comes down too soon or falls short."<sup>105</sup> When Satters is asked to provide his body measurements for the Bailiff's Paper he can remember nothing of the numbers and sizes of his life experience, but must begin afresh, primitively sizing his body with his hand as the measure:

With the fumbling circumspection of the bedridden, the shoulders huddled, his right hand travels over his body. It squeezes the twin-pudding of the biceps. With the help of the other hand it constricts the waist-line while, extensors at full stretch, he flattens himself along the ground. Making a callipers of his index and thumb, he fixes them upon his neck, the thumb standing steadily upon the sterno-mastoid surface, while the point of the index seeks, underneath, the antipode required for the diameter.<sup>106</sup>

Satters is outfitted in a composite costume of British military and sporting life: "knee-cords, football stogies, tasselled golf stockings, a Fair Isle jumper, a frogged mess jacket, a Mons Star pinned upon the left breast, and a Rugby cap, the tinsel rusted, of out-size, canted forward."<sup>107</sup> Perhaps this costume represents emblematically what Satters had aspired to be in life, but he recognizes that it is a sham from top to bottom. Indeed, unlike his cocky companion Pullman, Satters perceives that he is no more real and substantial a person here in the Camp than he had been in his lifetime. But then, as he says, "'what does it matter which isn't real! I was never real. Am I?'"<sup>108</sup>

Satters, with his blond curls and baby-blue eyes, is a sensualist on a primitive scale. He is greedy for the attentions of his old friend



Pulley, and directs all his "engines of unwavering melting expressiveness in his direction."<sup>109</sup> Satters's speech is an integral part of his infantile and wondering style. Expressing boundless gratitude for Pullman's presence, Satters 'stares and steins' while he lapses into what Lewis called 'the stream of the unconscious':<sup>110</sup>

Pulley has been most terribly helpful and kind there's no use excusing himself Pulley has been most terribly helpful and kind —most terribly helpful and he's been kind. He's been most terribly kind and helpful, there are two things, he's been most kind he's been terribly helpful, he's kind he can't help being—he's terribly. He's been most fearfully tiresome when he likes and he's been tiresome too but who doesn't when they're not?<sup>111</sup>

### C: The Bailiff

When Geoffrey Bridson was casting for a BBC radio production of The Childermass in 1955, Lewis told him that he had modelled the Bailiff on George Robey.<sup>112</sup> That famous British music-hall performer, whom Lewis elsewhere called 'the monster of mirth,' represented the blend of comedy and menace in the Bailiff's character. Pullman coaxes Satters to attend the Bailiff's tribunal in these mixed terms:

'I don't want to!' Satters wails, and stamps.  
'Yes, I know, but it will be most awfully jolly. You'll simply die with laughing.'  
'I don't want to die!'  
'You shan't, you shan't! But you'll absolutely choke yourself with cheeky fun it will be so frightfully amusing!'<sup>113</sup>

"Our period is like a person," Lewis had written in 1921; and the Bailiff is its true representative. The actor-comedian is in his element in periods of upheaval, for he can nimbly switch from one role to another and so change with the times. Lewis discussed the figure of the comedian in Time and Western Man, where he recalled that there had been a comic heracleitean on the Greek stage who had refused to pay the rent on a house he had taken "on the ground that he was no longer the same man who had rented it." Lewis continued, making the connection with contemporary



philosophies of the flux:

The comedian, in the picture of these many distinct, intermittent selves, would find his professional paradise. For all comedians are necessarily volatile, love change for change's sake, prefer parasitically other personalities and other lives to their own—such is their faculty and function: they would desire never twice to be the same thing: to have at their disposal an infinite number of masks.

Lewis went on to write that the successful contemporary personality is that of an actor, like Mussolini, "with all the instincts bred behind the footlights, the apotheosis of the life-of-the-moment, of exteriority, display and make-up; and of an extreme instability, fundamental breaks and intermittences, the natural result of the violent changes of, and the return of great violences into, our time."<sup>114</sup>

The Bailiff sets up for the day's judgement in his bema, a stage itinerant "in the form of a Punch-and-Judy theatre." On the right hand side of the two panels forming the base of the stage are painted a hieroglyph of the cone, cylinder, and triangle with the words Es bibe lude veni inscribed above. On the left are represented the two intersecting triangles and centre eye, symbolic of the Maha-Yuga, surmounted by Mithraic horns and having a goat-hoof below. The Bailiff's judicial outfit blends features of the Hellenic, Buddhist, and Hebraic traditions. Some of the properties of the stage are borrowed from the tombs of Archimedes and Absalom.<sup>115</sup>

The Bailiff himself, "a dark-robed policinelle," carries a Punch-stick of multiple uses: bludgeon, night-stick, truncheon, baton, and puppet-staff. From time to time he merges with the life-sized figure of the Thracian Bacchus with leopard skin and thyrsus painted on the inside wall of the stage. The Bailiff promises an 'eternity of intoxication' to the dithyrambic spectators he has gathered about him, but his complex outfit promises tragedy as well:





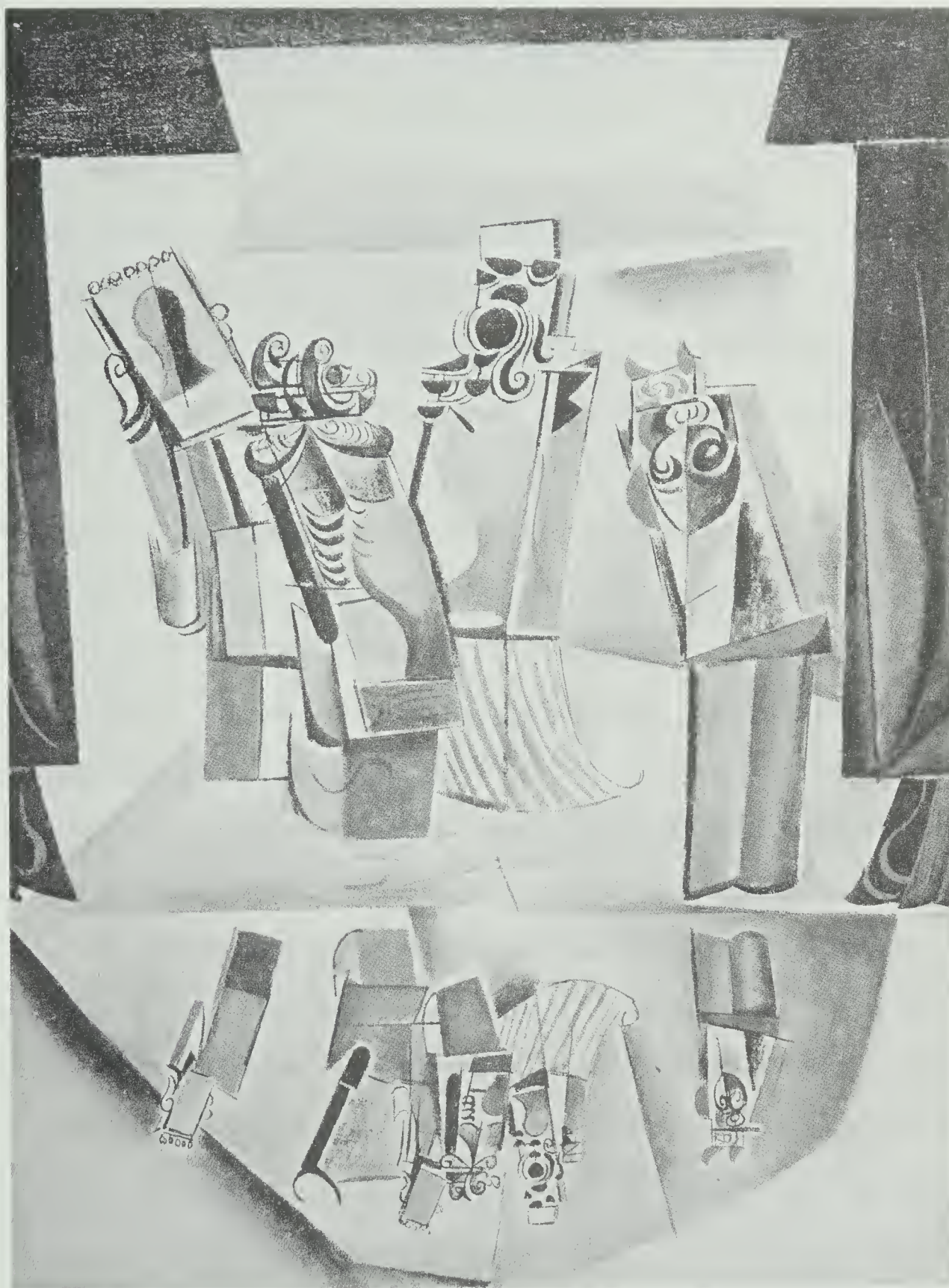


Plate 4





The lymph of a bottomless obtuseness appears to invade his beaked heavy and shining mask, anaesthetizing it even to the eyes. In his hands he slowly revolves the pivetta used by the atellan actors to mimic the voices of the mimes of classical tragedy. He places it between his lips, letting it lie there, idly sucking it, a baby with its dummy, his eyes expanded to their fullest blankest and blackest.<sup>116</sup>

This pivetta, like the Bailiff's Punch stick, has a variety of uses. It is his pacifier, whistle, and monocle, and also the amplifier of his noises.

The Bailiff's connection with Bacchus is a significant one, for the Bailiff encourages drunken or ecstatic behaviour in his audience and he provides music for constant dancing and hypnotic mass movement.<sup>117</sup> Like Macrob, most of the Bailiff's crowd are caught in a tragic rhythm, the fated "mournful swagger" of a doomed clan.<sup>118</sup> The dance merges with tragedy, and the music-hall is obliterated by the war.

Before the Bailiff has even appeared in the Camp, Pullman provides the reader with a few indications of the magistrate's calculating character. Two of his mottoes are 'Nothing is but thinking makes it so' and 'Where there's a will there's a way'.<sup>119</sup> Pullman provides many examples of the Bailiff's business-man style. Calling the Bailiff a Professor of Energy in Stendhal's sense, Pullman repeats his Napoleonic creed: "'What I like is a modern six-cylinder up-and-coming hard and hustling big business man—brisk, efficient, with a great line of talk!'"<sup>120</sup> The Bailiff's initial address to the appellants again emphasizes his efficiency. "'Business first is our motto, Gentlemen! Our customers are our friends, that's another. It's a new ideal of friendship nothing less, the ideal of the modern age I might almost say.'"<sup>121</sup> Our initial impression of the Bailiff is as a business man, heartily confronting the mob of dead men gathered before his stage. "'...the truth is I like to see a few corpses about, it makes the others seem almost alive.'"<sup>122</sup>



We may recall here that British society was mobilized for World War I with the motto Business as Usual displayed in many public places. It was not, however, initially anything more than a commercial slogan as Arthur Marwick explains:

As early as 11 August [1914], H.E. Morgan of W.H. Smith and Son, in a letter to the Daily Chronicle suggested that the country would do well to follow a policy of 'Business as Usual.' Harrods, the top department store of Edwardian England, took up the phrase in a display advertisement which, two days later, announced their policy for the war. Later in the month a crowded meeting of advertisers and traders resolved that, together in unity, they would fight the war on the slogan 'Business as Usual.' . . . . The phrase, then, was not, as has been said, coined by Winston Churchill, but by the big shopkeepers, anxious to unite duty with profit; once coined, however, its velocity of circulation was enthusiastically boosted by the Government.<sup>123</sup>

The Bailiff's motley equipment instructs the reader about his protean character. He is, as Pullman says, everyman and no man at once. Listing some of the many guises seen in the Bailiff, Pullman asserts that he is just what you see. "' . . . he is the Bailiff simply, I don't understand the insistence on something factitive behind him or why he is not accepted as he is.'"<sup>124</sup> Pullman reassures Satters after his first hallucination by citing the Bailiff's peculiar authority in these matters. "'They are only mirages. . . that's how the Bailiff explains it he ought to know. He says he sees as many as twenty different Bailiffs on some occasions.'"<sup>125</sup> The Bailiff in performance, entertaining and cajoling his audience, is a multiplicity of selves. We see him in action throughout The Childermass 'conjuring' the crowd's conceit:

Uncle Punch amongst his jolly children!—the solemn mask is off, the satiric on. He is all grinning vulpine teeth, puckered eyes, formidable declination of the ant-eating nose, rubicund cheeks, eyes of phosphor. The goatee waggles on the glazed bulbous chin; it is the diabolics of the most ancient mask in the world exulting in its appropriate setting. With an effort he repudiates the satiric grimace. As his face changes the audience becomes hushed. The tragic mask casts its spell, as well upon him: as he feels it coming down over his skull and its awful shadow gathering upon his face he becomes another, the tragical, person.<sup>126</sup>



Lewis discussed the crowd-master's trick of feigning feminine weakness or bashfulness in The Art of Being Ruled. The shaman or magician of the tribe assumes a bashful style to ingratiate himself among the group.<sup>127</sup> The Bailiff as shaman conspicuously demonstrates to the crowd his dependence on them. "Slowly driving out the decorous pomp of his magisterial manner, a half-baffled grin develops on his face." As the crowd's applause rises to a peak and then subsides again, the Bailiff bows and smiles. "A thick light of servile buffoonery illuminates his face. Then the mask of Punch-like decorum and solemnity is reinstated."<sup>128</sup>

The Bailiff uses a variety of voices to accompany his multiple roles. As he advertises the addition of mountains to his territory he wins over the crowd, and "everybody settles comfortably into the care-free hypothetical surroundings suggested. . . ."<sup>129</sup> His Black-Baby Swatch-cove patter at this point is a blend of babytalk and imitation pidgin. Both styles pander to the crowd's simple vanity:

BAILIFF. 'How worms talk in sounding-boxes—it's too marvellous Kit! Come now and I'll show you how it is that the words get melted, in glandmud-washing of de Swanee-bottom. I'll explain the last, that's the mud-flats where the dark words are dancing — I can't show them you — they get swamped.'<sup>130</sup>

In a tour de force calculated to thrill the crowd, the Bailiff parodies one of their fellows, 'Master Joys of Potluck, Joys of Jingles,' the petitioner Belcanto:

'I then turns to the strange mixed marriage of false minds of a man and again:—"Ant add narfter thort wilt re Sweet Will honey?" sez I softly to the doomed Deedaldum cum Deedaldee. Ant Shorn o' Joys no John o' dreams but rarely pragmatikal, to solemnly declare that he will add narfter thort he wilt, for it's all one to him seeing orl his thorts is narfter thorts for the mattero that come-to-think. . . .'<sup>131</sup>

The Bailiff is clearly a sort of behaviourist who feeds the camp with sensations and then observes their responses. As he admits to the audience, "'You may be said to resemble a company of veterans whom we





have monkey-glanded. . . ."<sup>132</sup> Again, apparently drunk with enthusiasm, he directs all his performances at arousing sensations in the crowd, reducing them to bundles of responding tissue. He is a 'human engineer' who is impatient of articulate verbal responses. He forces the artist Potter, for example, to promise "to eschew all outward manifestations" of his talent. Potter is then allowed into Heaven because like most painters, he is quite inarticulate. "'Now that is all in your favour. If there's one thing we dislike more than an image, it is a word. The logos we do not regard as an artistic trifle by any means. We're very serious about the word. With us the verb is The Verb and no nonsense . . . ."<sup>133</sup>

The Bailiff reveals that there is unease among the great ones of Heaven, now that the Angels have perceived among humans a "determined scientific classwar of great-versus-little." He is fearful himself of losing his own privileged position in the Camp once the great ones rouse themselves and re-assert their authority. So he is seeking to adopt the human techniques for degrading men of genius "by means of a progressive system of isolation."<sup>134</sup> The great spirits and intellectuals of earthly life, the Bailiff has observed, are first segregated from the bulk of the society—preferably under the guise of obsequious veneration. Once the classes are polarized, the small man of common intellect will have his way clear. The 'great Untouchables' will then be in the isolated human category where they can no longer interfere in the ways of the world. Button-holing an imaginary small 'modern man,' the Bailiff continues his analysis:

'If you can persuade them, once they have been locked-out and marked "great," to invent a cant of their own, which is a further barrier to communication, why then the thing is as near perfect as mortal hands can make it. . . . That is the work of your great crowd-masters, those great engineers in human plastic.'



If the Bailiff now has it simplified and "plain as a pikestaff," he plans immediately to adopt the humans' methods "so that it shall be in heaven as it is on earth."<sup>135</sup> His own ugly body and lapses into low-grade style help deceive the crowd into taking his side. "'Well I always behave 'beneath my dignity,' it is my most settled policy, I would not be my own equal for worlds, I would not contaminate myself by being myself with these carrion. So I cheat the vulgar of that handicap, at all events. . . .'"<sup>136</sup>

The motives of the businessman-Bailiff become increasingly suspect as The Childermass develops. Assuring the crowd that they are not merely his clients, but his friends, the Bailiff advises them that they do not have time to examine the credentials of the administration of the tribunal. Mopping his brow to draw attention to the heated atmosphere, he asks, "'Is this the place for all that hot air?'" Answering his own question, he takes a revealing stance:

'You know I'm a good old sport? Weeel?' (He starts back, lips thrust out, eyebrows raised, hands argumentatively extended as though posed for the climax of a hard bargain in the picture of a rustic bagman, gazing magnetically round in jocund intensive inquiry.) 'Weel?' he drawls again, with more finality, answering for the audience up to the hilt, with humorous flourish thrown in. Catching the eye of Hyperides he pulls himself hastily together. In his stateliest manner he resumes, the bagman dropped out of sight in a trice. . . .'<sup>137</sup>

The values of this commercial traveller are as dubious as his credentials.

"'Because today we have a true understanding of economics, we know that Plain-men cannot afford ideals,'" he comments.<sup>138</sup> The Bailiff, with his bag of sensational tricks and his mastery over the crowd, is a grotesque transmutation of the Renaissance ideal man of many talents. He is a bagman with an "empty port-manteau" on his back.<sup>139</sup>



### D: Hyperides

Where the Bailiff degrades humanity to formlessness, Hyperides is a builder and creator. His name, abbreviated to Hyp or Hipe,<sup>140</sup> suggests the fixing solution of photographic processing. Again, the term 'Hyper-idean' suggests a theorizer or muscular intellectual. Hyperides's "smashed michelangelesque nose" and "Vitruvian curls"<sup>141</sup> link him with sculpture and architecture. Hyperides is associated in the Bailiff's mind with Prometheus, giver of the arts of civilization and champion of man:

'The Greek is the first Occidental--his athleticism (which even all his own sages condemned), his offensive animal health, his aristocratism, his logic, his secularity, his ridiculous optimism (in a word the "Greek miracle" if you please!), those are our antitheses, those are the features of the pagan, the now discredited, European world--of the heretical, promethean, insurgent mind of the West. That is dog to our cat for ever!'<sup>142</sup>

Hyperides himself speaks the language of the Aeschylean Prometheus, who alone of the Titans concerned himself with saving the human race from destruction by Zeus. He brought mankind fire and raised them to a higher civilization by his skill and arts. Here Hyperides addresses the Bailiff:

'Is not your Space-Time for all practical purposes only the formula recently popularized to accommodate the empirical sensational chaos? Did not the human genius redeem us for a moment from that, building a world of human-divinity above that flux? Are not your kind betraying us again in the name of exact research to the savage and mechanical nature we had overcome; at the bidding, perhaps, of your maniacal and jealous God?'<sup>143</sup>

Hyperides takes the part of the higher value in opposition to the Bailiff's plans to reduce both man and gods. By contrast, the Bailiff works to degrade and devalue the human and the divine. As the universal solvent, he uses his skills to break down civilized values; but he has no conception of what to do with the new cloacal residue:





ALECTRYON. 'The trouble is that only your hatred is creative it is your only way of being creative. Can you really pretend that what you have to give or even want to give is worth the trouble of all the dramatic reversals you contemplate? Are you the super-man? No. You are not even a man. . . .'

BAILIFF. 'Oh oh oh oh!' (A pause) 'I am an alkahest!'<sup>144</sup>

Hyperides's limp and workman's clothing suggest an association with the maimed artisans Hephaestus, Vulcan, and Weland of Greek, Roman and Norse mythologies. His leg has been maimed as if in compensation for his magical powers. Hyperides has fallen even lower than the traditional laughing-stock of the gods described in these myths. Under the Bailiff's jurisdiction this 'last Aryan hero' is reduced to a mere 'loudspeaker' eternally wrangling with his master.

The followers of Hyperides are a tatterdemalion company dressed in a mixture of Greek and Norse costumes. The more athletic among them are naked and spend their time flexing their muscles. Before the debate between the Bailiff and their leader, the Hyperideans circle round and round the Bailiff's box bearing Hyperides on a litter. This action suggests the ceaseless movement of electrons whirling around the nucleus of an atom:

. . .when they hurry about they are seen with the trailing black wings of their cloaks scudding in their wake. They cover the ground with great rapidity, with the rush of the intent supers of a highly-disciplined Miracle. At the slightest hint they take fire, in everything over-zealous, they leap into every suggestion of a breach, theirs is the Legion of Lost Causes. . . .

. . . . .  
The Hyperideans rush with heavy shouting round and round the enclosure, their manoeuvre suggestive of the passage of a circular stage army organized to represent a colossal rout.<sup>145</sup>

Their action and belligerence are unintelligent and futile. Enthusiastically shouting Spenglerian prophecies of doom to the Bailiff's mob, they excite only themselves, in an "intensity of impotent anguish."<sup>146</sup>





The Bailiff expresses terror at the prospect of debating against a Welsh orator of Hyperides's camp. Instead, he submits to a cross-examination conducted by Alectryon, whom he connects with the 'French-Action' and the students of the 'Steel-helmet' type. Alectryon, the handsomest of the Hyperideans, is a falcon-like figure in a black cloak which falls straight from his shoulders. Above a swastika-clasp at his throat, his face is cast in the severe lines of a wolfish symmetry, "in lean silver bronze, that olive that might be fancied as the moon's variety of sun-burn of a pallor incorruptible by anything vulgarly hot, as though he had been a nocturnal lunar votary divinely protected from the grilling heat of the day-star." Alectryon's smile is one of "an inaccessible radiation," and he carries a black leather portfolio of continental cut.<sup>147</sup> As his name may suggest, Elec-try-on, he is a manipulator of electric and nuclear force, one who manifests what Lewis called "the murderous absentmindedness of science."<sup>148</sup>

Both Hyperides and the Bailiff are caught in an ancient and permanent opposition, magically attracting and repelling each other:

BAILIFF. 'Well you know I've always listened patiently to all you have had to say: I may even add—to you—against my clear duty I have entertained at all times the most affectionate feelings for you. Perhaps I could be accused of having fallen under your charm to some extent!'

HYPERIDES. 'The magic, as you know, Imposter, is all on your side.'

BAILIFF. 'There I can't agree. I think you underestimate your magic, and overstate mine. Your vitality is magical.'

Again, the Bailiff says that he should tell mankind where they have gone wrong in their exercise of power. That is what he knows he should say, he tells Hyperides, ". . .if I weren't so awful despotic—you could say it but you wouldn't—you're too democratic so it never gets said."<sup>149</sup>

Despot and democrat, the Bailiff and Hyperides will not save man from himself.



### E: The Crowd--Friends and Enemies

The population of the Camp is divisible into the Bailiff's friends and his enemies. The friends of the Bailiff are his crowd of admiring hangers-on, like Pullman, and the more numerous simple spectators at the trial. His enemies are the Hyperideans and a scattering of independent individuals like Barney, Macrob, and Moody. The Camp society is divided vertically by function as well. At the bottom are the peons, slave labourers of the Camp who lead the automatic existence of insects and machines. Exhibiting more awareness, although scarcely more intelligence, are the Bailiff's mob, whom Hyperides calls "this helpless mass of bottle-sucking cannon-fodder."<sup>150</sup> Finally, immediately below the crowd-masters themselves are the Bailiff's and Hyperides's allies and administrators: the heiduks, headsmen, litterbearers, and trumpeters of the Camp.

In the last section of this study of The Childermass I shall be examining in detail both the Bailiff's mastery over the crowd and his conflict with some individual figures. At this point I should like to show the perspective from which Lewis views this crowd. Lewis returns again to a distanced stance in describing the over-all movement of the Bailiff's mob. On the first page of The Childermass Lewis had projected the City and its environs as if in an isometric plan. In the following passage, as though containing the crowd within the walls of a single cell, Lewis views the form of its existence microscopically:

Dense centripetal knots or vortices of people collect marginally, beneath the wall or beyond the path, but a march is kept up where the ground is even by an active inquisitive crowd of promenaders passing each other back and forth like the chain of a funicular. . . . The argumentative heat of the interior of the ganglia is shown by sudden spasms at the surface or by a tendency to expand and contract. Occasionally such a compact circular mass or vortex will move bodily in this direction or that, without impairing its close formation; these will drift like ice-



bergs into the fashionable fairway, as a discomfited protagonist seeks to escape or as he who has bested him in the symposium presses upon his heels his clacker at full-cock or as two absent-minded political-thinkers who have become surrounded by devotees or by objectors seek to continue their promenade as they discuss the day's events. There are many smaller circular bodies of a half-dozen figures, prospective nuclei of large groups.<sup>151</sup>

#### Part IV: Electric Shock

All other times have bred criticism and its wholesome revolts and corrections. . . by this toleration those times have shown that they possess some humility, or in other cases that they were great enough to allow censure. The names we remember in European literature are those of men who satirized and attacked, rather than petted, or fawned upon, their contemporaries. Only this time exacts an uncritical hypnotic sleep of all belonging to it. This. . . is the sleep of the machine.<sup>152</sup>

The Childermass is an exploration of power and of its effects on the sensibilities and capacities of men. Its characters are in the largest sense in transition, for all the campers in this "treacherous health-resort" hope to escape it and to pass into the Magnetic City across the river. Their existence in the meantime is a tenuous one; they are mental constructs in a world of shifting realities. As Pullman explains to Satters, "'On the physical side we are, at present, memories of ourselves. Do you get that? We are in fragments, as it were. . . .'"<sup>153</sup>

Lewis provided an important index to the system of thought underlying The Childermass in his analysis of the new mass media coming into wide use in the first decades of this century. He recognized that the electric communications media are potential instruments of suggestion and hypnosis, and he made a modest proposal for their use:

About a year ago an essay by Mr. Haldane appeared on Gas-Warfare. It was an apology for the men of science engaged in the manufacture of poison-gas: the idea was that by their efforts they would make 'the next war' of such a terrible nature that it would 'end war.' In The Art of Being Ruled one of my objects was to provide a substitute for Mr. Haldane's method. It had been triumphantly demonstrated, I showed, that these democratic masses could be governed without a hitch by suggestion and





hypnotism—Press, Wireless, Cinema. So what need is there, that was my humane contention, to slaughter them?<sup>154</sup>

### A: The Piecemealing of the Personality

In his analyses of the time-philosophies of Bergson, Whitehead and Alexander, Lewis documented their theoretical disintegration of continuous physical reality into discontinuous patterns of sensation. "Time, on the physical side, and apart from its discrimination, in the hands of Bergson, into mental time and mathematical time, is merely change or movement. An object. . . realizes itself, working up to a climax, then it disintegrates. It is its apogee or perfection that is it, for classical science."<sup>155</sup> Lewis built up his argument in Time and Western Man inductively, first showing the concrete manifestations of the time-mind in literature and painting, and then analyzing the philosophical theories that produced them. "In this way I, at the outset, unmask the will that is behind the Time-philosophy, by displaying it in the heart of the representative ferment produced by it. . . ."

In his analyses of the philosophies of time, Lewis argued for a greater philosophical awareness of our coherent and concrete idea of self, which he defined as "our only terra firma in a boiling and shifting world."<sup>156</sup> The self that perceives constantly a continuous reality was, he thought, being undermined by a philosophy of the sensations—of change and of action. In Lewis's view the philosophers of the flux were attracted to the romantic past and to the eagerly-anticipated future, but they ignored the concrete present. In discussing Proust, for example, Lewis wrote that the epic projections of time in the narrative form of autobiography effectively embalm the writer in his own remembered past. We have in Proust a new kind of historian, Lewis wrote, one who is



"distracting people from a living Present (which becomes dead as the mind withdraws) into a Past into which they have gone to live. It is a hypnotism that is exercised by the time-vista, or by those time-forms or exemplars that are relied upon for the mesmeric effect."<sup>157</sup>

The time-world of Lewis's description is a one-day world of intermittent existence. In place of form, Lewis wrote, Whitehead substitutes formation, the reiteration of a particular shape. In place of the personality he substitutes the pattern of memory. Through 'Advertisement,' the vulgarized forms of these philosophical theories and through popular channels of communication, the time philosophy becomes the time-mind:

Advertisement is the apotheosis of the marvellous and the unusual; likewise of the scientifically untrue. The spirit of advertisement and boost lives and has its feverish being in a world of hyperbolic suggestion; it is also the trance or dream-world of the hypnotist. This world of the impossible does not pretend even to be real or exact. The jamesian psychology--more familiar to most Europeans as couéism, is its theoretic expression. What you can make people believe to be true, is true.<sup>158</sup>

The Bailiff officiates at the piecemealing of the personality in The Childermass. Lewis had written in The Art of Being Ruled that if an individual could be divided into a multiplicity of selves, his integrity as a person would be destroyed. "For he is that continuity. It is against these joints and sutures of the personality that an able attack will always be directed."<sup>159</sup> As manager of all the media of communications in the Camp, the Bailiff can take the process one step further; for he can then control the reintegration or mobilization of the particles on a mass scale. Addressing himself to his audience, the Bailiff looks out "comprehensively as a conductor with a numerous and complicated orchestra."<sup>160</sup> Lewis summed up the Bailiff's two-edged technique in his comment in the first number of The Enemy: "Our period is like a person,



in short, just as we are less and less like one; the secret of its being is technically expressed in terms of mass-psychology."<sup>161</sup>

The Bailiff falsifies the ideals of freedom for the person with specious appeals to the factitious Common Man:

BAILIFF. 'Who are the beneficiaries of our system? Tom Dick and Harry, good luck to them! Not you!'

ANOTHER VOICE. 'Where are Tom Dick and Harry? Disclose their whereabouts?'

BAILIFF. 'This is assuming the proportions of a mutiny. I shall argue with you no more. . . .'<sup>162</sup>

His real contempt for the individual comes out in his argument with Macrob, whom he calls a 'habit' and a 'stammer' of space-time.<sup>163</sup> What every creature of the Camp ought to understand is that he is not worth a fraction of the trouble taken with him by the Bailiff's administration. Further, he continues, ". . .you can regard yourself as existing in a sort of mental excrescence, or annexe, of Space-Time. . . ."<sup>164</sup> There is no self among the petitioners apart from what they habitually see and touch. They are their sensations, and they are in the process of becoming whatever they are made to witness and sense. The Bailiff continues his definition of the Space-Time self for Macrob:

'We Space-Timers are a sentimental lot we make collections of everything that Space-Time has ever uttered, that is all, that is sufficiently articulate to hold together. So instead of happening once and for all sharp and sweet you have meandered and rattled on through what must have seemed to you a never-ending lifetime, through countless numbers of stupid events "you" were dragged by slow heavily-moving Space-Time, you can't remember, we help you to forget all that: but it was not a very lively chapter in world-history I can promise you. . . .'<sup>165</sup>

Under the Bailiff's management, the self is broken down and the components of the person are disorientated by magic and suggestion. The Bailiff is then free to implement his will in the reintegration process.

Satters recognizes his dependence on Pullman for his modicum of





self-hood. He dreads being alone, thrown on to his own meager resources, in the magnetic night. "'I become well rather childish to be frank when you're not with me and so beastly morbid.'"166 Throughout their Time-travels Pullman and Satters experience many transmutations of their own personalities. In these regions of increased plasticity they have no discrete selves. "'We are organic with the things around us,'" explains Pullman. "'This piece of cloth. . . is as much me as this flesh. It's a superstition to think the me ends here.'" He taps the skin of his hand. 'Even you are a part—as you remarked I was despatched to you! I am a messenger.'"167 When Pullman had tried out his explanation of Camp-existence on the Bailiff, he had related the anecdote about the Leyden jars and had then concluded that life in the Camp persisted out of memory and habit. The Bailiff's comment continued to hang in Pullman's mind: "'Now the murder's out,' is what he said."168

#### B: The Crowd-Mind

The Bailiff effects this 'murder of the person' by sedulously reducing the Camp to a featureless mass. At the same time, he feeds their vanity by levelling the last lions left among them:

'Bitted baited, shot-at-while-hobbled, caged and bun-fed, all alive - oh and no members' - days nor close-seasons for the big-game when its human! No. All the greatness is cheap at last, that's high time but it's a bit of a surprise—so their brightness can be used to light your pigsty with electricity and be made to supply your kennel with cheap heat. I always thought it was poetry—it only shows how mistaken one can be. There's none of that any longer that goes idle that's a dead cert, that power's tapped easy enough, given the instruments that's child's-play in fact. . . . '169

The Bailiff's human charges learn to degrade themselves with their own technology. For by levelling that which is greater than themselves they lose definition:





'As you pop in the bath-salts or ram down the clutch it would be sacrilege to question the gift-horse in the mouth or look for catches in the hire-purchase system. If the average lot is cast in a paradise of exploded giants—on all hands they succumb like nine-pins and the effluvia of the decay of the splendid plunder fill you with an agreeable confusion. . . . To pick brains has been your expressive Saxanglish tropology and they grow bigger and bigger Pelion on Ossa one damned thing after another—I'm sure I don't know where we shall end! what with the mountains instead of molehills and still only moles to account for the mountain except for dead giants dropping like flies on Ossa, it's a pell-mell magnification. That is magic, no one sees, it is the shaft that flieth by night.'<sup>170</sup>

The crowd assembled around the Bailiff are rarely distinguished individually. They appear as 'cells' or 'gangs', charlestoning in chorus lines or gossiping in groups. Their relations with each other are homosexual, for they have all been steered through the Yang gate of the Camp. Whatever their age, the crowd conform to the advertised twin ideals of immaturity and passion. ". . .these wizened skins of an ageing gossip-column Lido-tart with lifted face and gorgon-eye. . .are doctored with paste and pigment, which is obtained by them at the central canteen, where appellants are encouraged to improve upon nature or to put the finishing touches to the chemical processes of mummification of the salvage-system here at work."<sup>171</sup>

The Bailiff admits that the crowd come to him "as if he were a music-hall."<sup>172</sup> The rhythms induced in the crowd stamp a surface identity on their faceless mask. Hyperides confronts the Bailiff with his role as manager of this manufacture of sponges. "' . . .you are drilling an army of tremulous earthworms to overthrow our human principle of life, not in open battle but by sentimental or cultural infection. . . .'"<sup>173</sup>

In many of his works, Lewis analyzed the role of the technologies of communication in the moulding of regimented societies. In Time and Western Man, for example, he described the reversion of these societies to a tribal primitivism. The emotionally-excited and heavily-



standardized masses are "hypnotized into a sort of hysterical imbecility by the mesmeric methods of Advertisement," as though "in response to the throbbing of some unseen music."<sup>174</sup> These mesmerized masses of Lewis's analysis form an abstract class of mankind which is "part of the democratic flattery" of modern life. It is an abstract class that has no consciousness or will of its own. "If you tickle the sole of the foot of a sane man he temporarily loses his reason," Lewis wrote in The Art of Being Ruled. "When excited, confused, worked up, drugged, and shrieked at by the magnate and his press for a few weeks, 'Mankind' (Homo stultus) becomes ferocious, that is all."<sup>175</sup>

The Bailiff's management of his crowd works first through ingratiation and then through exploitation. Under cover of insinuating himself among the masses and of pandering to their rudimentary sense of freedom, the Bailiff gathers into himself real concentrations of magical power. "'Le mob, c'est moi!'" he crows. "'I am the conjuror for their conceit: I will show them who is mob and who is not!'"<sup>176</sup> The Bailiff manipulates the sensations of the crowd in the Camp. He can both excite them with conflict and spectacle and enervate them with flattery and musical interludes:

The overture to Don Giovanni is begun. The minor chord of the opening is interpreted with traditional correctness. After that, first with the connivance, then at the suggestion, and finally in the midst of the furious insistence of the black chef d'orchestre, the Mozartian allegro becomes effaced beneath the melting ice-cream glaciers of the 'Blue Rockies', lapped up by the chocolate-cream breakers of the 'Blue Danube', rounded up by a Charleston, rescued momentarily by a jigging violin, lost again in a percussion attack.<sup>177</sup>

The appetite for sensation which the Bailiff instills in the mass-consciousness accelerates with time. Like the delirious Pullman intoxicated with the plastic sensations of Time-travel, the Bailiff's crowd is possessed by what Hyperides calls "the demented itch for. . .action."



The Bailiff offers nothing concrete for the individual consciousness surrendered by the crowd. Instead he obsesses them with movement and change, breaking down their concrete world into a dynamical flux.

Hyperides perceives that the Bailiff's great promise is nothing more than "an eternity of intoxication."<sup>178</sup> Again, Hyperides accuses the Bailiff of casting all the concrete objects of the real world into a witches' cauldron. "'Is your art, for all its mechanical subtlety, profounder than that of Protagoras that it took the greatest intellect of the Greek world all his time to confute?'"<sup>179</sup> The reference is to Plato's refutations of the Sophists' relativity of knowledge and ethics in many of his dialogues. Protagoras accepted the Heracleitean theory of the flux and argued that therefore knowledge was reducible to the subjective experience of a mutable observer. One of the most well-known aphorisms of Protagoras is that "Man is the measure of all things." Lewis introduces the Bailiff-drunk James Pullman with an echo of this phrase. "It has wandered beside this Styx, a lost automaton rather than a lost soul. It has taken the measure of its universe: man is the measure: it rears itself up, steadily confronts and moves along these shadows."<sup>180</sup>

The Bailiff manufactures a specious vitality in his charges, for everywhere there are signs of an ongoing elimination of individual existence. A 'bellwetherer' moves at intervals among the 'doomed herd' at the Bailiff's court. Again, the Bailiff refers to his staff as 'expert drovers.'<sup>181</sup> He reminds the court of the limitations which their present circumstances impose: "' . . . though we enable you to romp you must remember that it is only skin-deep, underneath there is nothing but a corpse—just as beneath the quick and animal flesh of living people there is always the skeleton.'"<sup>182</sup> Lewis had explored the naked response of





the crowd to purveyors of sensationalism like the Bailiff in his books The Art of Being Ruled and Time and Western Man. He perceived that the ultimate gratification of a hunger for action lay in self-destruction:

It is very greatly to the credit of Mr. Russell that he saw the true nature of those doctrines [of action] before the War came to enlighten us all. But even today, in their unfathomable conservatism, there are still masses of people who continue to think as though the War had never occurred, and still fall into these by now time-honoured traps, labelled for the unwary 'action' and 'life'—traps that are nevertheless choked with millions of corpses.<sup>183</sup>

Gustave LeBon's book, The Crowd. A Study of the Popular Mind, written in 1895, analyzed both the mentality of the crowd and the techniques of its leader. Of the crowd, LeBon wrote that it is a highly-suggestible receiver of the impulses of its master. It is anonymous and irresponsible:

The most careful observations seem to prove that an individual immersed for some length of time in a crowd in action soon finds himself—either in consequence of the magnetic influence given out by the crowd, or from some other cause of which we are ignorant—is in a special state, which much resembles the state of fascination in which the hypnotized individual finds himself in the hands of the hypnotizer.<sup>184</sup>

Again, LeBon wrote that the crowd is at the mercy of all exciting agents external to itself. "It is the slave of the impulses which it receives."<sup>185</sup>

The mental life of the crowd, according to LeBon's analysis, borders between the conscious and unconscious states, and it yields readily to the suggestions and impulses fed to it. The crowd 'thinks' in images, and these images produce in turn a further series of images with no necessary or logically cohesive relation. It accepts as real any images evoked in its mind, despite their estrangement from the facts of common-sense.

LeBon employed the metaphor of the illusionist in his discussion of the impressing of these images on the mind of the crowd:

These image-like ideas are not connected by any logical bond of analogy or succession, and may take each other's places like the slides of a magic-lantern which the operator withdraws from the groove in which they were



placed one above the other. This explains how it is that the most contradictory ideas may be seen to be simultaneously current in crowds.<sup>186</sup>

LeBon wrote that the crowd-leaders should not appear to be too far in advance of the mentality and capacities of the crowd; they must be lovable and seemingly imitable. The leader fixes the crowd in some one time period. Thus he imposes an identity and a sense of 'tradition' or cohesion in the crowd. "A being possessed of the magical force of varying time at his will would have the power attributed to believers of God."<sup>187</sup> Initially the crowd-master operates on the crowd by means of the affirmation and repetition of beliefs or doctrines. Once a 'current of opinion' is formed in the crowd's mind, "the powerful mechanism of contagion intervenes." It is interesting to note that in LeBon's analysis the contagion will be transmitted even if not every member of the crowd is present on one spot. "The action of contagion may be felt from a distance under the influence of events which give all minds an individual trend and the characteristics peculiar to crowds."<sup>188</sup> As the individuals merge into the crowd, LeBon continued, they lose personal energy and responsibility for their thoughts and actions. They become "vain shadows, passive, unresisting, and powerless automata."<sup>189</sup>

LeBon's imagery throughout his classic interpretation of the functioning of the crowd is that of the electric technology emerging in his time. He wrote in his introduction, for example, called "The Era of Crowds," that his era was one of transformation brought about by two factors. The first factor was the destruction of established traditions of religious, political, and social beliefs. "The second is the creation of entirely new conditions of thought as the result of modern scientific and industrial discoveries." In the heading notes to Chapter One of his book, LeBon wrote of "the turning in a fixed direction of the ideas and



sentiments of individuals" and of the "predominance of medullar activity."<sup>190</sup> Throughout his discussion the words magnetic, mesmeric, electric, dynamic, and hypnotic recur frequently. Further, in a passage cited above, concerning the contagion of ideas, he wrote of thoughts "acting at a distance," a distinctive feature of electric as opposed to mechanical transmission. In the final section of my analysis of The Childermass I shall show how Lewis explores the magnetic, hypnotic, and electric components of the effects of mass communication on the sensibilities of the individuals forming the Bailiff's crowd.

### C: The Revolutionary Simpleton

In his essay "The Revolutionary Simpleton," Lewis examined the modern mania for change and novelty. It was, he thought, this romantic enthusiasm for new sensations and constant agitation of the social and artistic norms of society which was producing so much pseudo-revolutionary thinking. The revolutionary simpleton of Lewis's analysis is the enthusiast of the "surface effects on the plane of vulgarization" of all the potential for genuine improvement made possible by science.<sup>191</sup> He is excited by the prospect of novel sensations, but is quite incapable of understanding the profound and fundamental alterations of his life that modern revolutionary scientific advances have made possible:

It is plainly the popularization of science that is responsible for the fever and instability apparent on all sides. To withhold knowledge from people, or to place unassimilable knowledge in their hands, are both equally effective, if you wish to render them helpless. As Einstein is reported as saying in conversation, the characteristic danger to human society is that the outstripping intellect will destroy the backward mass of men by imposing a civilization on it for which it is not ready.<sup>192</sup>

In Lewis's analysis, modern technology was being transformed and perverted both by the scientifically-backward mass of society and by their manipulators. The vulgarization of revolutionary science was the dangerous





product of both the crowd-master and his sensation-hungry subject.

The Bailiff advises the crowd to combine for maximum efficiency. It saves time, he explains, and "such combinations ensure the maximum effect of reality."<sup>193</sup> The Bailiff's spectacles and shows help unite the crowd. For example, when the Camp is fogged in by an obscure yellow light, a vision of the first giant metropolis "Babber'ln" appears before the massed audience. It is a mirage rising out of the river, "having the consistency and tint of the wall of a cheese, but cut into terraces full of drowsy movement which are reflected in the stream." The syllables of the name of this visionary city pound rhythmically in the mind of the massed crowd. "A stolid breath of magic, they are manufactured, as they are uttered, as a spell: nothing but an almost assonantal tumbling upon the tongue and lips, preserving the dead thunder and spectacle of a fabric of gigantic walls." Not everyone gathered at the Bailiff's amphitheatre can see the city clearly, and no one can touch it. But as the incantation grows stronger, the phantom picture gains substance. In the darkness, some members of the crowd pick out particular details of the city. "'I can see an evident an elephant and a howdah I am sure, like a biscuit."<sup>194</sup> The vision of Babber'ln is a product of auto-suggestion. Some spectators receive a fragmentary sensation, which they amplify and feed back to the rest of the crowd. Others are merely "listeners-in" who can see nothing directly, but speculate wildly and gossip about what seems to be in front of them. In this way the total impression is built up. The whole sequence canvasses the varied media of communication which feed the passively-receptive crowd. At the rear of the audience, among the furtive ticklers and flirts, Satters tunes in to a Children's Hour broadcast, "his solitary pick-up this side death."





One medium blends into another in this sequence:

'And the alligators, the hottest of the bunch, opened their great big hairy jaws, but just at that moment a great shout went up from the palace yard, and—'

Zoomp! There is the thudding pash of a flashlight. It is for the gazette (Camp Special).

Two voices come up behind them:

'It's a cinematograph.'

'No, it's not a cinematograph.'

'Very well have it your own way!' The speakers fall out.

. . . . .

'Who was the God of Babber'ln?'

'Bell.'

Bell was the god, Bell was the god.<sup>195</sup>

This vision is followed almost at once by another sensational apparition, the phoenix-ritual. The bird is exhausted, heavy with its archaic function. Whatever organic integrity it once possessed is now subsumed under its symbolic role in the opening rites of the daily tribunal. Bird, camera, and airplane are fused in this functionary of the Bailiff's ceremonials. "What can be seen of its eyes, annealed in the furnace of its repeated resurrections, is a half-iris, that weights, drugged and leaden, the lower hemisphere, swelling out from the nether line of the socket. It advances obliquely, knowing itself watched, perhaps striking fear, legendary and immortal, aware of its mystery." The departure of the phoenix is as rivetting as its arrival. As it flies over the upturned faces of the crowd below, the "puissant whirr and insuck of its wings become fainter as the trumpets break and stop suddenly upon a triumphant note. The mirage disappears, the dusty red daylight is reinstated and the walls of the customary city are there as before." It has flown over to the Camp, deposited its basket and then flown off again. Immediately, the basket is removed to the Bailiff's barge. To the disinterested eye of the narrating observer, the balding object of the crowd's fervent attention is "about half the size of a full-grown



buzzard." It deposits jerkily a "dishevelled basket" almost as large as itself.<sup>196</sup>

Lewis perceived that no aspect of life in modern European culture could be studied in isolation from its technological development. He recognized in the revolutionary character of modern science a pattern that would inevitably affect social organization:

. . .all serious politics today are revolutionary, as all science is revolutionary. If you stop to consider it, this must be so; for since politics and science are to-day commutative, it would be impossible for one of them to have this revolutionary character and not the other.<sup>197</sup>

The rapid advance of the efficiency and popularity of the media of communications radio and cinema, together with the collectivist re-organization of British society during and after World War I, altered the sensibility of the society. Arthur Marwick, in his study of British society and World War I, draws an analogy between the conditions at the end of the War and at the end of the Napoleonic Wars:

One hundred years before, Lord Liverpool's ministry had sought release from the physical and spiritual ills which afflicted the country at the end of the Napoleonic Wars by providing one million pounds for the building of new churches. Now in the latter part of another world war Parliament again passed a 'Million Act,' the money this time to be devoted to scientific research. A new deity was being enthroned.<sup>198</sup>

Lewis perceived, with Samuel Butler before him, that the new technology was altering human evolution. "The contemporary European or American," he wrote in The Art of Being Ruled, "is a part of a broadcasting set, a necessary part of its machinery. Or he is gradually made into a newspaper-reader, it could be said, rather than a citizen."<sup>199</sup> Against the democratic cliché of freedom of expression for the individual, Lewis posed the possibility that a group of individuals would all express their personalities in the same way. "In short, it would be patent at once that they had only one personality between them to 'express'—some



'expressing' it with a little more virtuosity, some a little less. It would be a group personality they were 'expressing'—a pattern imposed on them by means of education and the hypnotism of cinema, wireless, and press."<sup>200</sup>

The Bailiff is the executor of the vulgarization of science into the sensational toy of the mass-mind. As he flatters the Camp with further promises of sensational delights, he reminds them of all that they have already inherited:

'All that marvellous edifice of Progress, those prodigies of Science, which have provided us moderns with a new soul and a consciousness different from that of any other epoch, that have borne man to a pinnacle of knowledge and of power----'

(He licks his lips as though there were a great 'sexual appeal' in the word 'power' and gazes fiercely round the audience, allowing his eyes to rest especially upon the goggling round-mouthed countenances of the youngest, smallest, seated listeners, to his immediate left: then he continues.)

'---all that staggering scientific advance that has made modern man into a god, almost. . . .'<sup>201</sup>

In The Childermass, through the Bailiff's court, Lewis shows the modern democratic society immersed in a technology for which it was unprepared:

The opinions and discoveries of the most 'advanced' of mankind, of the learned and splendid few, were thus made available for a mass of people (whom these opinions and discoveries reached in a garbled, sensational, and often highly misleading form) who were themselves, as they still are today in mental equipment and outlook, savages—only, savages degenerating rapidly under the influence of their own 'civilization.' . . . . These theoretic, purely scientific, and aloof researches they transformed into some sort of weapon or tool at once, to get at food with, or sanctimoniously rip up their neighbour. . . .<sup>202</sup>

#### Part V: The Magnet and its Analogues

BAILIFF. 'You would all be somnambulists in this concentration camp of dead fish except for me and live in dreams like the animals. I stand to you in the capacity of will which is conscience too, that is why I get a little alarmed when I see you collapsing into a torpor.'

HYPERIDES. 'Go on old mesmerist.'<sup>203</sup>





The magnet is Lewis's compound symbol for the multiple forces at work in The Childermass. It identifies the sense of mythic attractiveness which the City across the river exerts on the Camp. The Magnet, a popular adventure magazine for boys, suggests the appetite for sensation which the Bailiff stirs in his infantile male audience. Finally, the magnet collates the early theories of hypnosis—'magnetic sleep' and 'animal magnetism'—with the mesmeric effects of electric technology. Our time, Lewis had written in The Enemy, is "the sleep of the machine."

The City exerts a magnetic attraction throughout the red atmosphere and haematic embankments of the Camp. The Bailiff's promise of the future on the other side and his continual manipulation of the crowd's sensations of their environment hold all but the most fractious together. He deprecates the Hyperideans' elevation of their own leader:

'Observe them hark back to their saints and heroes under the very shadow of that great Unity, the Omnipotent Abstraction in person, in person set up here by us as an immense awful magnet to engulf all souls to Itself. They carry on just as though we had not set up and so on.'<sup>204</sup>

Within this larger magnetic environment, individuals exert attractive power over others. The Bailiff, for example, attracts Pullman. "At the word Bailiff Pullman withdraws into a hypnotic fixity of expression, as if something precise for him alone had been mentioned under an unexpected enigma."<sup>205</sup> Pullman in turn, as his name suggests, is the magnetic centre of Satters's limited field of action:

'It's your marvellous way of explaining things you put them beautifully. You make everything so clear even if one doesn't understand. I think you must have a great deal of magnetism!'  
The magnetism receives a squeeze.<sup>206</sup>

#### A: Action

The Bailiff, as manager of the spectacles and performances at the court, flatters the crowd at every turn with the marvels of 'its own'



technology:

'Look you now! Goodman God like a Mister Drage in His infinite power with wisdom, but especially wisdom, has given you an Earth to sack. Be plenty! go to it! 'tis the Promised Land of worm's desire. Fancy putting all these preposterous forces at your disposal! you wouldn't think He'd have trusted you would one? It's evidently His great love that's what it must be.'<sup>207</sup>

The first miracle the Bailiff staged for Pullman was the 'joining of the eye-glasses,' a travesty of Christ's making the blind man see. The exploding cock, sudden brilliant electrical storms, and vision of Babber'ln suggest the sensational effects of the magnet-dynamo complex.

The Childermass was printed in 1928 between intensely yellow cloth covers, toothed with a border of red triangles. This motif is reiterated in the text in the "insidious yellow glare" surrounding the vision of Babber'ln. "'Have with you to Saffron Walden,'"<sup>208</sup> Pullman exclaims. This light is compared to "smoked glass," a medium used to protect the eyes from the glare of electric arcs in welding and from the sudden flare of sunlight immediately before and after an eclipse. Electric yellow is also the colour favoured by the futurist painters in their expression of the universal dynamism of reality. The futurists used the techniques of dynamic discomposition and complementarism of strong colours to bring movement on to the canvas. They theorized that this movement and light in their compositions destroyed the materiality of bodies in space. By 'adding the dimension of time' to the dimensions of length, breadth, and depth, the futurists attempted to express a plastic interpenetration of bodies. In his Blasting and Bombardiering Lewis recalled his 'counter-putsch' against Marinetti's Futurist campaign in London. Lewis described a lecture on futurist theory during which the poet Marinetti had simulated the fire of machine-guns and artillery. Lewis then recounted the exchange after the performance. To Marinetti's excited accusation "You have never



known the ivresse of travelling at a kilometer a minute," Lewis shook his head energetically. "Never. I loathe anything that goes too quickly. If it goes too quickly, it is not there." Marinetti feigned astonishment that Lewis should want to see reality clearly. "But you do see it. You see it multiplied a thousand times. You see a thousand things instead of one thing." Lewis concluded his comments with a rebuttal of the futurist's position. "Je hais le mouvement qui déplace les lignes."<sup>209</sup> In The Childermass Lewis exposes the futurist fetish of dynamism. In the opening pages, a cock explodes from a church-spire and mesmerizes the infantile Satters into stammers of admiration. Throughout the text, the continual echoes of World War I and the deranged quality of the Bailiff's sensational Space-Time world work to counterbalance the futurists' romance with action.

#### B: Hypnosis

The link between the magnet and the psychological condition now known as hypnosis was formed in the early years of scientific investigation of automatic behaviour.<sup>210</sup> The Swiss speculative doctor Paracelsus (1490-1541) postulated a sympathetic system of medicine according to which the stars and other heavenly bodies, especially magnets, influence men by means of a subtle emanation or fluid that pervades all space. From the Sixteenth Century on, following the speculations of J.B. van Helmont, it was believed that a magnetic emanation radiated from one man to another. This magnetic fluid could be directed by the exercise of the will to influence directly the minds and bodies of others. F.A. Mesmer postulated that a special variety of magnetic fluid, which he called animal magnetism, could be used to cure diseases. Following Mesmer, observers named the phenomenon of artificial somnambulism (now known as







This contemporary cartoon satirizing a mesmerist session shows the "tub" dispensing fluid through its movable iron rods and ropes. The ladies in the center are forming a "chain" or mesmeric circuit, and those at the sides have passed out from overdoses of fluid. Other patients grapple for the "poles" of surrounding bodies, while the mesmerist, depicted by the traditional ass's head of the charlatan, stirs up the séance by fluid emanating from his own supercharged body, and astrological beams communicate influences from outer space.





hypnosis) mesmeric or magnetic sleep. A student of Mesmer's theories showed in 1780 that under magnetic sleep, a subject's movements could be controlled by the magnetizer. In this state the subject's diseases might be cured, and afterward the subject would only dimly recall events that had occurred under magnetic sleep.

In 1841 a Manchester doctor, James Braid, rediscovered Alexandre Bertrand's physiological and psychological explanations of magnetic sleep. He concurred that the magnetizer's suggestions were working themselves out first in the mind and then through the body of the subject. Renaming the study hypnotism Braid showed that subjects are often abnormally susceptible to impressions on the senses, and that much of the peculiar behaviour manifested by hypnotized subjects was induced by suggestions made verbally or otherwise by the hypnotist or his observers. Since Braid's time students of hypnosis have conducted research into three areas of hypnosis. In the area of physiology and hypnosis, it has been shown that fixation of the eyes, or other forms of long continual and monotonous or violent sensory stimulation in the induction of the hypnotic sleep induces a temporary abolition of the cerebral function. Consequently, medullar functions predominate and the subject is gradually reduced to machine-like unconscious automatism. Secondly, in the area of the psychology of hypnosis, beginning with the research of Bernheim in Nancy, France, students have emphasized the influence of the hypnotist over the mind of his subject. In his book De la Suggestion, published in 1884, Bernheim showed that the expectations of the subject functioned also significantly in the induction of hypnosis. Further, he wrote, the subjects' generic symptom is increased susceptibility to suggestion, and the operator works 'en rapport' with the subject by means of mental suggestion.



For the purpose of comment and analysis Lewis has revitalized these original speculations on magnetic sleep. The theories of Paracelsus and Mesmer are permanent types in the speculations of students at an early stage of comprehension of a new form of experience. Lewis has translated the emerging forces of the electric technology into the type of speculative formula of the mechanical, pre-psychological age of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries. Lewis's magnet in The Childermass is the complex of forces operated by the Bailiff. His contemporary 'magnetic sleep' is the state induced by the powerfully suggestive control of the mind through mass media. These media of communication in The Childermass channel and amplify the will of their operator, the Bailiff. As I hope to show, Lewis analyzes in great detail incidents showing the induction of suggestion (and thus hypnosis) through the fixations of a single sense. Particular ideas operate effectively on the minds of the Bailiff's crowd because he eliminates all interference from contrary or irrelevant ideas. His control over the sensory and intellectual input of the Camp militates against any kind of independent thinking. We recall here that the French analyst of the psychology of the crowd, Gustave LeBon, used the metaphors of connecting electric current, hypnotic influence, and induction of willed ideas into the sensibility of the 'democratic' mass.

The Bailiff's influence extends over the whole Camp and its environs. Even while ranging out into the free spaces outside the Camp, Satters senses the Bailiff's presence. "'He obsesses me his eyes haunt me I always see them! He hates me I'm certain!'"<sup>211</sup> The magistrate confirms Satters's suspicion in his opening statement of policy at the court:



'Those regions are in the most absolute sense, you understand, out-of-bounds. You will do well to remember that we are not so ignorant of what you do as you sometimes seem to suppose: although we are unable to control those regions as we should like we yet have access to them at all times and are able to detect the most insignificant happenings!'

As they are standing in the audience at the trial, Satters again senses the Bailiff's censuring attention and is certain he is looking at them.

Pullman is unconvinced:

' Looking at us—what, the Bailiff?'

'Yes.'

'And if he was?—he was looking at everybody.'

'No, he meant us.'<sup>212</sup>

With the steady cadence of fanned oars the Bailiff arrives on the Camp side of the river like a contemporary Cleopatra. His barge arrives in silence and plugs in to the near bank, its nose entering 'an upholstered socket introduced into the perpendicular front of the landing-stage.'<sup>213</sup>

He has made contact with the Camp. Lewis elaborates the motif in his description of the Bailiff's physical make-up and energy. "Tapping on the flags of the court with a heavy stick, his neck works in and out as though from a socket, with the darting reptilian rhythm of a chicken."<sup>214</sup>

Again, when the Bailiff is at the height of his peroration against the Greeks, his head goes back "like the beak of a tortoise into its shell-covered socket: beneath the shadow of the ornamented eaves the eyes blaze enthusiastically, the nostrils bulging with vaticinatory fervour."<sup>215</sup>

The Bailiff's bema is like the spout of a volcano, a funnel for latent energy. Macrob's attack sets off an energetic resonance:

With a rattle and shock the charging body crashes into the bema which it tosses back half-a-foot upon its socket in the volcanic rock, the fletched topknot oscillating like an instrument set to register such upheavals. . . .<sup>216</sup>

When he is in full control of the crowd gathered before his bema in the amphitheatre, the Bailiff is the still centre of an energized





environment. His eyes dart across "his cloud of witnesses," the faces of his audience. He fixes the crowd visually and controls their response. "No verbal response comes from him at once: he plunges his little world into silence, in ambush, full of mute gusto, at its centre."<sup>217</sup> The Bailiff's eye is extended magically over the crowd. The Carnegie batch arrive guiltily in the courtyard, dodging and ducking "to avoid their master's eye." But that eye has an elastic range:

That large unwinking roaming orb plays hide-and-seek with the six nimble heads of the artful dodgers, a relish for the crude pastime uppermost with it for a moment. The ball of the detached eye, like a ball on a cord, is rushed up a hundred times within an ace of the disappearing heads: each time the skulking object is just allowed to escape, with its artful dodging, behind an attendant, or beneath the wall. The bland eye is sent out by the Bailiff innocently to watch a hole between two backs, while out of its corner it observes its prey exultantly disporting itself elsewhere. It flashes across them when they are not looking. (Did he see me? it's impossible to be quite positive.)<sup>218</sup>

The crowd-master Bailiff extends his dominance over an undifferentiated mass of faces. He explains to Macrob that persons ideally responsive to his appeal have no absolute sense of self. "'It's only imbeciles that suppose themselves of any importance: still self-importance is a weakmindedness that has to be humoured we always respect illusion—of such stuff is the Kingdom of Heaven made! It's our livelihood! Our show over there is in the truest sense an asylum; and our patients are our children.'"<sup>219</sup> The Bailiff's show combines spectacular displays of power with servile demonstrations of the showman's will-to-please:

From star to stage-struck there are tokens, signals; quickly he turns back and in response to the telepathic salvoes of sympathy and admiration registered, he shakes his head and screws his eyes still tighter: that dear stupid staring awestruck thing--the eternal Public--that will have its favourite show himself again, heaven bless its big foolish heart! In this attitude a greatly enlarged mask of Chaplin, but deeply pigmented, in sickly-sweet serio-comic mockery, it shakes above the audience.<sup>220</sup>

The Bailiff's audience is in fact an extension of himself, and they project back to his delighted eyes a flattering self-portrait. "The



faces relapse into a ferocious dumbness. Malevolent leeches, a crowd of eyes hang upon the Bailiff's. The upturned disks with an intensity of invitation offer themselves as mirrors to him, each one a grimacing reflection. As for the Bailiff, he is beside himself: his spirit dances upon this mesmeric sea, he bobs buoyantly in his appointed box."<sup>221</sup>

The Bailiff's voices are as mutable as are his mesmeric visual projections. He can modulate his voice through his impersonations, ranging from a B.B.C. "pleasant strong voice of great cultivation" to "Dickensjingling and Swatchelstammering."<sup>222</sup> The Bailiff is proud of his speech equipment and he throws the light of an electric torch into his black mouth. "'Seen my talking-tools, honey?'" His role as the pacifier of his baby crowd is easiest to play:

'All love-language oh boys all love-language love-cant and childer-chatter, dis poor swatch-cove'd never talk anything else if he had his say you just bet your death: he'd never never be the big cross Bailiff not he that'd be silly!'<sup>223</sup>

His voice ranges over the crowd with the same freedom that his eye has, detached from his body and extended through space:

In a relative calm, the ring of grinning masks beneath him blasting away in the silence, responding sentence by sentence in scorifying dumb-show, the Bailiff resumes his address. Sometimes a hand shoots out and points at him dumbly retorting to something said. Like the effect of a nomad wind travelling a forest with each sentence some section of the crowd is stirred and murmurs.<sup>224</sup>

Words, the Bailiff recognizes, are "powerful engines," and are dangerous in the control of the wrong persons. He allows the crowd only the most rudimentary form of speech:

'Certain forms of prayer—exclamations of astonishment or of rapture at the mechanical marvels of creation—words of anger when confronted with God's enemies—hatred on the appearance of a heretic—the sounds indispensable for conducting the operations of hunting eating evacuating and lovemaking: that is one thing. We scarcely regard these as words. But the sort of engine that words may easily develop into when extended beyond those simple operations of stimulus-and-response, attending the fixed phrases of the animal-life, is quite another matter.'<sup>225</sup>



Just as the crowd throws back the Bailiff's visual image, so it echoes his platitudes. He flatters and cajoles them with soothing formulas. "'What ideas have we? Whatever they may be they are today everybody's so we must be all right! That is not an idle boast. Except for these few malcontents there is an absolute flat unanimity — it's almost monotonous. We are the humble children of Progress.'"<sup>226</sup>

Some features of the hypnotic cohesion of the Camp have already been remarked in this study. For example, the Bailiffites have been observed responding to the rhythmic insistence of the Bailiff's bands. "A number of solitary mincing figures in addition to the dancing couples pass them in a willowy one-step, and as each lonely devotee of purple passion (reverse-order, but fanatical pedant of the passionate canon) glides past with a rigid swimming gait or a rakish high-frequency trip, he cocks a brazen glittering abandoned eye upon the respectable spouses."<sup>227</sup> Again, in the Camp's Space-Time outback, Pullman continually reminds Satters that they may alter their environment by auto-suggestion. They can will the river nearer, he claims, or will themselves to sleep.

Throughout the first long section of The Childermass, Satters and Pullman experience a series of hallucinations and transformations. The increased freedom of these zones outside the Camp distorts the physical landmarks that define physical and psychological normalcy. In one major sequence, Satters is examining the Bailiff's Paper, a questionnaire designed to amuse the crossword puzzle addicts in the Camp. One question holds Satters's attention, apparently recalling some bawdy incident from his war-time experience. He lies on his back, bare-chest exposed to Pullman's unwilling view, and covers his face with the Paper. "This has





the appearance of a crushed mask, but without eyeholes, lips, hair, or any furnishings, about to be fitted on, blank but plastic." Satters is completely isolated from his surroundings, and the Paper is his sole supply of sensation. He is rivetted to it, weak and trembling with laughter and excitement. His voice from under the sheets is that of a child talking to itself in a daydream, but his dream is of the War.

"Now he grovels before Nurse Pullman (so hard-boiled yet kindly), the victim of the devils of Humour, of war pestilence and famine. All outside is blank Nowhere, Pulley is abolished. His lips beneath the paper whimper with the anguish of this false too great joke, his mouth and nostrils full of the Death-gas again, shell-shocked into automaton."<sup>228</sup>

When the Paper is finally shaken loose, Pullman re-establishes contact with the shell-shocked Satters; and Satters grows still in an effort to collect himself. But then Pullman detaches his eye from Satters's plight and Satters is re-isolated. Fear and anger mounting, Satters glares at the still phantom profile of Pullman. Words emerge very slowly; "they grow on a dumb root, as though coming at the end of an embittered submerged discourse." Satters barks out commands in his new war-time role until Pullman turns his head towards him:

Pullman starts as though shot, Satters stops. What? The head—! not the little hairy head that carries the eyes?—it is swivelled swiftly but the memory of the face is a tell-tale phantom projected by Satters. Concealment is vain, Satters sees you, he has you in his mind's eye, the game's up!

Satters shouts insults at the immune elusive head of Pullman, until the hoarse commands stop and a silence between them "scatters leaden asterisks and zeros, a pattering shrapnel."<sup>229</sup> Finally the machine — part machine-gun, part typewriter — breaks down in a feverish pitch of angry expression. "'Y-y-y-y-y-y-you howwid blag-blag-blag-blag-blag-blag-blag-





blag--!' A "stein-stammer" that can never complete its word, hammers without stopping. Swinging wildly at his unseen opponent, Satters at last crashes to the ground exhausted:

The vomiting of heavy sobs at last decreases in intensity. Pushing back the hair from the face, massaging gently either temple, the amateur male-nurse squats in a Buddha-lethargy, all this chaos subsiding upon his lap. The last sigh grumbles out, the mass is still. Pullman reigns sightless over the Land of Nod, his small fingers stuck into the damp coarse curls, like an absent-minded creator whose craftsman's fingers have sunk into the wet clay he has been kneading into a man.<sup>230</sup>

When Satters recovers himself, Pullman explains his brain's 'fit-habit.' The people in the Camp are constantly subject to hallucinations of this type, he tells Satters. They imagine that they are under attack from the apparition of their own persons, as though their mirror-images suddenly appeared in front of them. Satters has been battling with a projection of his war-time soul, induced by the questions on the Bailiff's Paper. Throughout the stages of Satters's fit, he and Pullman have been out of sensory contact with each other. Satters has been lost in his nightmarish reverie, while Pullman has been focussing his attention on a naval-battle between rival peons in fly-boats on the river. The two wars have been occurring simultaneously, and Pullman is the disinterested witness of both. Pullman's detached eye and his capacity for abstracting himself from the immediate human need of his companion draw attention to his remoteness from Satters at this point in their relationship.

In one sequence of transformations already cited in detail, Satters and Pullman oscillate wildly up and down the time and class scales of their existences, catching sight of each other only fitfully. The sequence began with Pullman fixing his eyes in withering irony on Satters's naked body. "Pulley must be trying to mesmerise him!"



Pullman's ocular bombardment has blown up the baby-world of Satters. Within the space of a few moments, Satters experiences the transformation from curly-haired babyhood to balding old age. He sweeps his hand across his head and a "calcined mass drops down, lighting upon his bare shoulders, and thence, in a few bumps, falls to the earth." With uncharacteristic perceptiveness, Satters at once connects his fragmentation under Pullman's hypnotic eye with Dr. Tyndall's experience of electric shock:

. . .it is a magnetic occurrence; he perceives Professor Tyndall standing before his audience, body in pieces--wonderful presence of mind! one upturned eye upon the floating arm, the other upon the upturned faces. Satters hears the well-known Satters-voice, disjoined from him as were the limbs of the Professor, from just near to him, addressing Pulley:

'Hallo! What's happened now? It seems they've cut off the light at the main! Are you cross?'<sup>231</sup>

In this incident of multiple transformations, both Satters and Pullman recover integrated consciousness slowly. Satters is knocked out, and Pullman turns back towards his recent combatant. Recovering his paternal role, Pullman adjusts his glass and collects Satters's discarded costume. "Then he returns in the direction of the aged animal carcass in combination with which they can result in his present chum who has disappeared and can never be his naked self in this enchantment it is painfully evident."<sup>232</sup> Neither Pullman nor Satters can recall his experience later in detail, but they accept such disruptions simply. "' . . .it's a question of take it or leave it. I told you: we are creatures of imagination we are not real in the sense of men," Pullman explains. Satters replies, "'That wallop you gave me just now seemed real enough.'"<sup>233</sup>

Both in the Bailiff's mesmeric rapport with the Camp and in Pullman and Satters's experience of Space-Time, Lewis is exploring the



features of magnetic sleep or hypnotism. Psychological suggestion and concentration on a single sense collaborate in inducing the automatism of the subjects. In his book Time and Western Man Lewis had made a connection between the time-obsessed contemporary philosophies of Bergson and Whitehead and the intermittent reality of simple sensations. The perceptive faculties were being abused by the false theory of reality posed by the timists, he argued. Like the Bailiff in The Childermass, Bergson, he wrote, "is unable to do more than promise 'an eternity of intoxication' to those who follow him into less physical, more 'cosmic' regions."<sup>234</sup> The Bergsonian world of sensation and change could only be perceived by the crude and naked visual sense deprived of memory, intellectual reflection, and the normal collaboration with the other senses. Lewis emphasized particularly the corrective function of the sense of touch, in collaborating the evidence coming from the eye. All the senses should function ideally in a balanced system, if the mind is to receive accurate data on the external world:

It is our contention here that it is because of the subjective disunity due to the separation, or separate treatment, of the senses, principally of sight and of touch, that the external disunity had been achieved. It is but another case of the morcellement of the one personality, in this case into a tactile-observer on the one hand and a visual-observer on the other, giving different renderings of the same thing.<sup>235</sup>

Lewis saw in the deliberate cultivation of the child-like eye a threat to reliable perceptual judgement. He saw in this isolation of the faux-naïf eye of the perceptual field the concomitants of manipulative power for the few and ignorant irresponsibility for the many:

What the Relativity handbook is saying the whole time is: Now try and feel about all these things just like a little child. Look at all these things primitively! Look at that big star up there, or at that duck-pond over there, or at the image in that great big mirror. . . as though you saw it for the first time! And all the stalest political revolutionary machinery is used (of suggestion, snobbery, intimidation) to ensure its success.<sup>236</sup>





In his attack on the Bailiff's philosophy at the close of The Childermass, Hyperides accuses the Bailiff of distorting reality in the name of his false theories: "' . . .you philosophers always speak as though men were heavily-muffled thickly myopic automata: you show them peering into a metaphysical fog in which they intuit painfully and dimly in the black recesses of their neural regions the forms and utterances of other men. What could be further from the truth?'"

In The Childermass Lewis has extended his speculations to all the senses and to the techniques by which they are thrown out of balance and by which the data from them is distorted. He shows the Bailiff moulding the minds of the crowd by spectacle, transformations, and verbal suggestion. During the vision of Babber<sup>1</sup> the crowd collaborates by a sort of mass-hysteria in the formation of the mirage. Rumour and the fragmentary impressions from a variety of communications media suggest elements of the vision. These senses in isolation determine the dynamics of the hypnotic process. The Bailiff himself recognizes the effects of sensory imbalance, as his comment to Hyperides suggests. "'It is only when we close our eyes—and open our ears for instance—that we realize how strangely unlike the purely visual world our datum can be.'"237 He admits that for the Camp as a whole he controls the sensory input through his manipulation of the electro-magnetic environment.

Yet the Bailiff knows too that he is caught in the pull of his traditional adversary Hyperides. In the necessary and permanent struggle between these two principles, the Bailiff has achieved the upper hand for the present time. Everything announces, however, that he can never entirely eliminate his opposite. Lewis had argued in The Art of Being Ruled that two kinds of revolution were being conflated in the contem-



porary mind:

In our society two virtues are baldly contrasted, that of the fighter and killer (given such immense prestige by nineteenth century darwinian science and philosophy) and that of the civilizer and maker. But the ancient and valuable iranian principle of duality is threatened. We confuse these two characters that we violently contrast. The effort in this essay is to separate them a little. It is hoped that certain things that have flown a grey and neutral flag will be forced to declare themselves as Ozman or Ahriman, the dark or the light.<sup>238</sup>

The Bailiff's desire to suborn Hyperides to his side in the degradation of the heavenly giants is of course one symptom in The Childermass of this "eternal mongrel itch to mix."<sup>239</sup> Another symptom of the conflation between the fighter and the civilizer would seem to be Hyperides's alliance with his mongrel crowd of athletic Greeks and unemployed Vikings. But through The Childermass the tense stalemate between the opposites is maintained. The Bailiff is fixed hypnotically by the voice and vitality of Hyperides, the 'loud-speaker.' They enact their primordial conflict daily, yet the tension never slackens:

The Bailiff is electrified at the impact of the new voice, and he lights up all over. The sounds stagger his senses like a salvo from a gong announcing battle from the positions of a legendary enemy. It is a hail from the contrary pole, it opens for him by magic the universe that lies between which before the voice came was shut and dead.<sup>240</sup>

Hyperides and the Bailiff both respond to the other's magic, and each recognizes his opponent's special type of energy. In the closing arguments of The Childermass the Bailiff asserts that he and Hyperides act as the conscience of each other. His analysis of their interdependence reinforces the pattern established between the Bailiff and the Camp, and to a lesser degree between Pullman and Satters. The exchange following demonstrates that even on the highest level of awareness, the relationship between parasite and host in the Camp is rooted in the manipulation of consciousness:



BAILIFF. 'Will you dispose yourself to listen—I am your conscience. . . .when my conscience speaks to me (as now yours does in me) I can, by repeated efforts, render myself finally insensible. . . .to make myself deaf is one and the same thing as making my conscience dumb, till at length I become unconscious of my conscience. You will perhaps make me dumb if you go on pretending to be deaf; that would be disastrous—consider! all the chat and chutzpah and the clatter of the prattling chete gone west—you would be without a conscience.'

HYPERIDES. 'Enough, I hear you.'

BAILIFF. 'I am glad. Insanity or apostasy is the alternative for him that hath ears and shuts them up.'<sup>241</sup>

### C: Electric Technology

In The Childermass Lewis examines some of the implications of the extension of technology into people's consciousness. Some forms of technology, like the photograph and cinema, have already been referred to in the course of this study. I propose now to outline in some detail the exploration in The Childermass of the electric medium of wireless in the Camp, and to suggest areas in which Lewis was tracing the influence of the new technology on British social and political life.

On February fourteenth, 1922, the Marconi Company began a series of half-hour regular broadcasts from Writtle in Essex. These vocal and gramophone broadcasts were at first experiments conducted by members of amateur wireless societies interested in improving the techniques of telephonic transmission. Since the Wireless Telegraphy Act of 1904, the Postmaster-General had had the sole authority in Britain to issue licences for wireless transmitters and receivers. Further, continuing validity of these licences depended upon the operators' conforming to conditions set by the governing Post Office. From the time of the early experiments at Writtles, the popularity of wireless boomed. In 1924 the Post Office issued 1,129,000 licences to listen-in.

Increasingly, commercial manufacturers of wireless receivers





agitated for more numerous and more complex broadcast facilities. Wireless broadcasting in the United States during the post-war economic boom had mushroomed. Asa Briggs writes, for example, that almost from the start the new medium was thought of as a "mass communication." Further, it was the lively or popular arts in America, the forms of entertainment that grew out of Vaudeville, which "were quickly turned into the mass media: neither indifference nor contempt gave Americans immunity from them."<sup>242</sup> The major commercial wireless concerns in Britain, all with American affiliations, predicted a similar direction and rate of growth for British broadcasting. The 'Big Six,' the Marconi Company, Metropolitan-Vickers, the Western Electric Company, the Radio Communications Company, the General Electric Company, and the British Thompson-Houston Company, negotiated at length with the Post Office for extension of programming and transmission. The British Broadcasting Company was formed in October of 1922, initially as a commercial company working for profit through the sale of receiving sets. The association of the commercial company with the Post Office, whose administration saw its function as a public service, was an uneasy one. Further, the office of Postmaster-General was itself a political appointment which changed often at the will of the party in power. It was not until 1927 that the Company was transformed into the Corporation, a public agency.

Through the nineteen-twenties the British Broadcasting Company was expanding in transmission through eight new main stations and in function into the areas of newsbroadcasting and educational programming. During these years the Company felt its way through tensions among commercial, political, and aesthetic criteria of service. The administration attempted to shape the evolution of an extended system of wireless transmission





throughout the nation. J.C.W. Reith, a Scottish engineer, was the first General Manager of the Company. He took the job in response to an advertisement in the October 13, 1922 evening Press:

The British Broadcasting Company (in formation). Applications are invited for the following officers: General Manager, Director of Programmes, Chief Engineer, Secretary. Only applicants having first-class qualifications need apply. Applications to be addressed to Sir William Noble, Chairman of the Broadcasting Committee, Magnet House, Kingsway, W.C.2.<sup>243</sup>

Magnet House was the centre of B.B.C. operations until 1923.

Wireless has permeated every corner of the Camp. The Leyden Jar, which figures importantly in Pullman's explanation of his fragmented consciousness, was used through World War I as a condenser for high-frequency wireless telegraphy. At the spectacle of Babber'In each member of the crowd contributes a fragment from his incomplete perception of the facts:

'If people can't see I wonder why they go on looking! I do wish, if we must look at all this, people would keep their heads still!' Pullman's opinion is distinctly heard.

The head in black silhouette is galvanized into erratic movement and detonates with pugnacious lisp:

'Listeners-in at large as usual! If people would mind their own business it would be so much nicer, don't you agree, for everybody?'<sup>244</sup>

This sequence of mass hypnosis in the creation of a visionary experience recalls to mind the aphorism of Heracleitus: "eyes and ears are false witnesses for men."

The Bailiff flatters the crowd with his description of the improvements he has made to 'their' Camp. He has had the circling belt of mountains raised around the Camp just for his audience of children:

Mountains are so respectable! Well, then, there are the old mountains over there; there they are, one, two, three and a glimpse of a fourth, I had them fixed up as I told you. It was no easy matter to get 'em to make their appearance as you can now see them and settle down in the reliable way they have as pukka mountains, as they are. I went into the whole matter with our principle engineer as it happens a Scot—a Scot—a very able person: he was dispatched to Iceland and he brought back the mountains with him or I should say their appearance.



Having thus reassured his crowd of its special merits, the Bailiff "switches to the calm lower key of conscientious expositor, frowning upon the setbacks of his morning's programme and its disadvantages."<sup>245</sup> Both the Bailiff's crowd and the Hyperideans obey instantly the summons of 'their master's voice,'<sup>246</sup> the advertising slogan of the Radio Corporation of America.

The Bailiff's mountains contain the Camp and yet are distanced from it. They are the boundaries of the appellants' perceptual field. Both John Reith and John Logie Baird, who worked on television for the B.B.C., were Scottish engineers. The southern part of England is low country, bounded to the north by the Pennines and Highlands and to the West by the mountains of Wales. The major centre of population is in a sort of bowl with mountains at its rim. As the bounding limit of the Plain of Death, the Bailiff's ring of mountains mystically attracts the attention of the appellants. This magnetic pull of the mountains in The Childermass may also suggest the kind of force Lloyd George felt emanating from the mountains of Wales. The Prime Minister commented that when he sought inspiration he always looked to the mountains of his origins, and he drew his strength from them:

I often feel that perhaps the speech of mine which gave me the most pleasure was at the Cardiff City Hall on the occasion of the unveiling of the statues to the 'Great Men of Wales', presented by Lord Rhondda. I relied on the mountains for that speech. This is what I said:

'The great men of any nation are like mountains. They attract and assemble the vitalising elements under the heavens and distribute and direct them into the valleys and plains to irrigate the land.'<sup>247</sup>

This speech was made and widely reported in 1916, while Lloyd George was Secretary of State for War in the Asquith and Bonar-Law Coalition government. He returned often to this theme in his public speeches and emphasized the 'mystic' force drawn from the mountains of his home. There is



another well-documented incident in the life of the Prime Minister which connects him with the Bailiff's ring of mountains and with their imported volcanic show-piece. On holiday in Naples in 1926, Lloyd George and his companions heard news reports that Vesuvius had begun to erupt again:

That was enough to stir up Lloyd George. The party set off for the top of the crater. By the time they reached it they were enveloped in black, sulphurous clouds, and every few minutes came a roar out of Vesuvius and flames followed. Most of the visitors made off hurriedly for the terminus of the funicular railway. Not so Lloyd George, who, with Martin Conway insisted on going right up to the lip of the volcano, where they stood singing with exhilaration.<sup>248</sup>

At the beginning of the third section of The Childermass the stage has been set, all the major figures have been introduced and their relationships established. The remainder of the text is written in the form of a script. Satters and Pullman have very little action in the balance of the work, and they become auditors of the performance. Pullman draws himself up like a child anticipating an exciting radio show. Making himself small as it were, he concentrates his attentions on Loudspeaker and the Bailiff. "'There, somebody's asking questions—I thought we were going to start.' They listen, Pullman launching himself up and sitting bent forward, elbows on knees."<sup>249</sup>

Several features in the Camp broadcasts suggest that these special entertainments have been laid on for sensation-hungry children. In the obscure yellow light of the vision of Babber'In a fragmentary Kiplingesque story is being carried on the air. "Satters greedily listens to a nursery-tale unfolded sotto voce by such a nice middle-aged auctioneer to an eager bright-eyed boy of not thirty-five yet. . . ." The sensational story is cut short before the "great big hairy jaws" of the hottest of the alligators snap shut.<sup>250</sup> Satters is left up in the air in the suspense.





In Asa Briggs's description of the early days of British broadcasting, he puts great emphasis on the popularity of the 'Children's Hour' broadcasts, with their jolly company of uncles and aunts. He quotes a remark of Arthur Burrows, who played one of the Uncles in 1924, "'there is no section of our programme work upon which more time and thought is spent than that termed the Children's Hour.'" Briggs continues his analysis of the reasons for this concentrated attention on the young audience:

Reith himself stressed the social value of the Children's Hour as a 'happy alternative to the squalor of streets and back yards': he scarcely mentioned 'uncles' and 'aunts' at all. Perhaps it was the fact that the Children's Hour was one of the earliest of programmes and in its origins one of the most informal which made many people cling to its fantasy world as long as they could: perhaps it was on more serious grounds that the young listeners of today would be the great wireless audience of the future or that character-building could be effected by radio that the BBC devoted so much attention to this programme.<sup>251</sup>

It was not only to the children that the sensations of radio programming were directed, however. Briggs also recalls that the first full-length play written for radio was broadcast on Armistice Day, 1925. The play was The White Chateau, by Reginald Berkeley. Ronald Blythe described the play as "an extremely harrowing trench-war story whose realism shook the twelve million people who listened-in to it, the more particularly as they were advised to do this while sitting in a darkened room."<sup>252</sup>

One possible correlate for the kind of transformation manifested by the Phoenix spectacle at the beginning of proceedings at the Bailiff's court is suggested by Sir John Reith's comments on the transference of power from the Company to the Corporation in 1927. He wrote in his autobiography that the old Company went out in a blaze of glory. He gave an account of an address he had delivered at the time in which he described the efforts of his administration "to give a conscious, social purpose to the exploitation of this medium." The work of the new Corporation would



take up where the old Company left off. "We have proved, as expected, that the supply of good things creates the demand for more. We have tried to found a tradition of public service, and to dedicate the service of broadcasting to the service of humanity in its largest sense. We believe that a new national asset has been created. . . ." Reith's title for this section of his autobiography and history of the BBC administration is "Phoenix Funeral Rites."<sup>253</sup> As the Corporation directors were careful to point out, the old BBC was dead, but the new BBC would live even longer. In the last days of the Company, the Archbishop of Canterbury spoke of its enormous influence in British life:

Broadcasting is now a well-assured factor in our national life--a uniquely widespread influence. There is no stratum in our social life, no place of recreation, no educational centre into which the influence of broadcasting does not already penetrate. I hear of loud speakers now in constant use all over England--in hospital wards, in union workhouses, in factory dining-rooms, in clubs, in the servants' halls of the great houses, and even among the workers in the fields.<sup>254</sup>

Broadcasting in Britain had burgeoned in the period between the two world wars, and it helped shape the political and social forms emerging in what William McElwee has called Britain's 'locust Years.' Asa Briggs begins his first volume of the history of the British Broadcasting industry by setting the early Company into its context in the national history:

The four years which followed from 1922 to 1926 were themselves extremely interesting years in the history of British politics and British society. The Coalition government broke up in 1922, and the first item in the programmes of the new BBC was a broadcast of election results: a Labour government came into power for the first time in the following year. In 1926 there was Britain's only general strike. Broadcasting, of course, made its début with these big events not in the background but in the foreground of people's consciousnesses. What could be heard in the background was the beating of drums, the blaring of saxophones, and the rhythms of the Charleston.<sup>255</sup>

The Childermass charts the uncertain probing of the massed crowds for their corporate face and voice. Lewis explores the question of identity



within the corporate existence through his study of the tyros and veterans among the Bailiff's friends and enemies in Camp. Close scrutiny of the text shows that Lewis has incorporated into "the politics of heaven"<sup>256</sup> features modelled on the politics of earth. The relations between individuals and the Bailiff's crowd mirror the kinds of tension represented by Britain's General Strike: particular segments of the society in a contest of will against the corporate whole. The Bailiff's extensions of power in the Camp militate against the person. Similarly, during the labour unrest of the nineteen-twenties, Stanley Baldwin's advertised symbols of 'the community' and the 'security of the British Constitution'<sup>257</sup> were defended unchallenged by the larger society in opposition to the dissident rebel unions.

An unnamed violence permeates the atmosphere of the Bailiff's Camp in The Childermass. As Pullman and Satters explore the outer regions they feel a thunder of blows and a slight vibration constantly under their feet. "'Nothing would surprise me once they'd started,'"<sup>258</sup> Satters shouts across to Pullman. The Bailiff drops a hint of this menace in his breezy address to the crowd:

'We have now to be very serious for a short while: for the main problem of salvation—namely, what or who is to saved—has to be canvassed at this point. Without splitting hairs—we shall have to split handfuls later on, I can assure you from experience—I am a plain man like yourselves, gentlemen. . . .'<sup>259</sup>

The Bailiff comes into open conflict with three mortal characters, Barney of the Carnegie bunch, Macrob, and Bert Moody. Each of these figures stands out from the crowd in angry masculine rebellion against the Bailiff's authority. Moody, whom Pullman and Satters discover during the interval at the Bailiff's trial, belongs to a lodge of petitioners who are veterans in the Camp. Moody had always been 'odd-man-out' in his





terrestrial life, but he maintained a sense of the value of his own identity, despite his bosses. "'Yewman, they treated yew worsennifyew-wazzunt a dog! I opptit.'"260 The Bailiff has been attempting to tame Moody by ingratiation, but so far he has resisted adjusting to the Bailiff's mould:

'When e sez Moody yewre a hodd feller!—odd e sez a odd-feller, I'm not goin to say starttorf I adderntarffer mind nottertell the old barstard orf but there's somfin yewknow wotmakesyew feel yew wouldn't bloomin well mind what e sez time e arst yew anyfin— I flushessup like a two-year-old time I earrim say hodd. E sez Bert, Hodds best e sez Haint hi hodd? Hand hi hansers yus I sez Hodds wot yewwiz Milord sez I as one man to another.'

The process is a slow one, and there are signs the Cockney labourer will cause more trouble before he "grows 'is bloomin wings" and gets out of Camp. Another member of the lodge, "a new man with a long memory," asks Bert about past misdemeanors. "'Wasn't yew sentorft orspital fer back-chat sameasthem gents corls it? Eer didn't the ole man say yor tongue-erd-be therbetterfer meddicurl er tenshun?'"261

The name Moody and the evidence of his uneasy relations with the authorities both on earth and in Camp connect him with the events of the Black Friday of British labour history, April fifteenth, 1921. The Triple Industrial Alliance of Miners, Railwaymen, and Transport Workers had issued a call for a national strike by the railway and transport workers when the Coalition Government of Lloyd George refused to accept the Sankey Committee recommendations of higher wages, shorter hours for the miners, and the nationalization of the coal industry. The threatened strike was aborted when one of the Union negotiators, Frank Hodges, made a careless and unauthorized offer of settlement to the Committee of the Members of Parliament. Seven days after the Triple Alliance had called for the strike, the Union side was fragmented by this blunder; and the miners





were forced to return to work on the owners' terms. In the years immediately following this collapse of union solidarity, several other industries forced wage-cuts on their employees. Julian Symons comments that April fifteenth was thereafter "the day known in the Labour movement as Black Friday, which marked the end of what was bitterly called the Cripple Alliance. It would be difficult to exaggerate the effect of Hodge's slip. Thomas often afterwards met on the platform the cry: 'Who sold us on Black Friday?'"<sup>262</sup> In the non-sequential time scheme of The Childermass Pullman and Satters have already encountered a baleful forecast of this defeat of the workers:

An accordion booms in a funereal ague, shaken and sobbing as it is jolted by the footsteps of the instrumentalist, Say, poor sinner, lov'st thou Me? They both look round. It is a peon passing them on the other side of the shed, playing as he walks. . . .

'Say poor sin-ner lov'st thou Me?' Satters booms dismally after him.

'This is too awful!' Pullman exclaims, looking with disgust at the bald hulk in front of him, resounding with Moody and Sankey.<sup>263</sup>

With these names of the American evangelists and composers of the Methodist hymnbook, Lewis brings together the worker Moody and the unsuccessful agent of his salvation, the Sankey Coal Commission.

Like Moody, Macrob is clearly marked out for punishment. He is assertively male, giped at by the Bailiff's gang of pathics at the Camp. Kilt swinging, he steps out of the crowd "alone of the innumerable silent clansmen, responding to some summons of fate." He has been physically degraded in the Bailiff's territories, and his rugged head "is suggestive of the summit of a drab monument of a hero which has been cast too impractically colossal and so escaped the attention of the parish cleaners and scrubbers, so that the birds. . . have stained its face with their droppings."<sup>264</sup> Macrob blames the Bailiff directly for this humiliation:



'In life is it not the thing that never is or becomes at all that is the most live part? That you cut out. It is as though you said "You wish to be rather than always to become, you chafe at the futility as you consider it of your magnificent action: very well, you shall have your wish!"—and then had composed a parody of eternity with the cheap and perishable material left over from all our becomings.'<sup>265</sup>

Finally aroused into open combat with the Bailiff-principle, the slow mind of Macrobian advances like a snail "horned blind and dazzled" from its shell until the muscular clansman is free to attack the Bailiff's bema. When the Bailiff's heiduks have finished tearing Macrobian apart they bring in a large executioner's basket, and "the fragments of Macrobian are stuffed and stamped into it." The Bailiff exults in his victory. "'No buttons missing? He'll come together within the magnetic walls, how angry he will be!'"<sup>266</sup>

Before dismissing the crowd for their dance interval after this demonstration of power, the Bailiff reminisces whiningly about the happier days in the past, before his customer-client-friends became so intransigent. "'...what's the—what's the end where does it all finish? One's no forrader at the end, one's always hated by this lot human cat-cattle though I say it who shouldn't one's not pop— not as one once was—loved I was!'"<sup>267</sup>

The execution of Barney draws the Bailiff's technological and managerial skills in sharper focus. The Bailiff has just been delivering a harangue, "'we are phantoms. . .nothing but one-way machines I assure you so do be careful'" when a sudden storm terrifies the crowd still further with its red tendrils of lightning. Then the Carnegie batch are brought in, and Barney is singled out for special judicial attention. He has already angered the magistrate by separating himself from the rest of his "team of clowns." Now, infuriated by a spectator's calling him Cissy, "the slender young blue-eyed lion of the slums" reaches out and



punches his mocker in the face. The Bailiff reacts immediately, as if stung by the blow himself, "up in his beetling on-ended crate."<sup>268</sup> But Barney refuses to be intimidated and attempts to reverse their positions by force of will:

Barney stares up with a glittering fixity as if to mesmerize the magistrate into descending within reach of his little tingling bantam-fist. With an enraged impotent suspense the Bailiff returns his gaze unable to act, checkmated by the staring eyes of the youthful slum-lion, until Barney's attention is distracted, then his more ductile organs are set free and his tongue wags with sudden fury.<sup>269</sup>

The Bailiff has Barney dispatched at once, Mannaei severing his head with one sweep of the cutlass. This execution, with Mannaei's display of ecstatic sadism, demoralizes the whole audience. Some of the crowd have fainted; others turn away in disgust from the torso of Barney still spurting blood on the pavement. The Samaritan Mannaei, his assignment completed, is dismissed in conspicuous disgrace. Mannaei is the name of the executioner of John the Baptist in Flaubert's "Hérodias" in the Trois Contes. Lewis has translated word for word Flaubert's description of the murder of the Christian martyr.<sup>270</sup> In both works the violent and self-indulgent power of an oppressor is let loose on a representative of an unyielding social order.

The Bailiff's retrieval of this uneasy situation is a marvel of public relations management. Sunk in showy grief in his box, the Bailiff stirs his crowd to a sympathetic response. Soon his grief is transmitted through the whole crowd, and all are shaking and snuffling in "a body of red-eyed deaf-mutes."<sup>271</sup> Making his apology to Alfred Carnegie, the Bailiff extends a hand with "rings embedded in its tawny meat" over the side of the bema. But the Bailiff is astonished to find that Alfred has been manacled:





'Pull off those disgusting things, quicker quicker! and never let me see an Englishman in this condition again—or I shall want to know the reason why! Do you hear? To everything there is a limit! Quicker! Quicker! I cannot bear this sight, these implements of slavery, this Briton's hands are the last straw! Who was responsible for this?—it is a scandal! How could you, who are slaves, presume to! Never! I am vexed—quickly! Poor Alfred.'<sup>272</sup>

Placing his hand in that of the Bailiff, stained with his comrade's blood, Alfred is told of his reward. "'Take Alfred right in, and place him on the right hand of the Master of Heaven. Amen'" The Bailiff assures Alfred in an aside that this order is "'only a formula, of course.'" With cheery good-byes on all sides, "the Carnegie batch in an elastic quick-time shuffle out down the fenced gangway, tripping to phantom fife-and-drum. . . ." <sup>273</sup>

Lewis used the manacled hand hanging uselessly by a loop or meat-hook as an emblem for the final chapter, "The General Strike," in his novel of 1930, The Apes of God. In that section of The Apes of God Lewis demonstrates that rumour and uncorroborated evidence worked to create a false picture of the degree of violence in the General Strike. Although in the novel Michael informs Dan that London is very unsafe during this 'very bad' strike, Dan's eyes and ears have observed the contrary during his walk through the city streets. "Dan did not smile—he was reflecting that London (except for the shocking under-bred behaviour of many of the motorists) was much safer than it had ever been since he had known it. . . ." When rumour and suggestion work unchecked, however, the Strike reports take on a violent colour:

The whole townland of London was up in arms and as silent as the grave and it was reported that in its eastern quarters, in the slum-wards such as Poplar, a Police-inspector and two Specials had been kicked to death and there were more and more violent riots in Hammersmith, where trams had been wrecked and street-rails torn up by the mob, and the Police stoned and injured: while it was confidently stated that in the North crowds had sacked the better quarters, in the big factory-towns, mines were flooded, mills were blazing, and the troops were firing with machine-guns upon the populace. The absence of newspapers fostered every report of disorder.<sup>274</sup>





**THE GENERAL STRIKE.**



**ENGINE  
FIGHT-TALK**



The head-long rush of this paragraph and its repetition of phrases like 'it was reported that' and 'it was confidently stated that' reinforce the sense of panic spread through an uninformed society.

News of Barney's execution and of the 'formula' for Alfred Carnegie's salvation will be carried in the Bailiff's local newspaper, The Camp Gazette. One recalls here that the British government began publication of a newspaper called the British Gazette on the first day of the General Strike. Julian Symons reports that the paper was under fire from the first day of its publication and that when asked under what regulations The Gazette was issued, the Government replied that it "was acting under the authority applicable to every Government from time to time." The Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, had put Winston Churchill in charge of the British Gazette. When the paper was attacked for printing biased news reports and for showing chronic partiality in the selection of news stories, Churchill replied: "I cannot undertake to be impartial as between the Fire Brigade and the fire." During the early days of greatest uncertainty about the extent and mood of the Strike, the British Gazette had extraordinary powers to shape the reporting of strike news. The first issue was run at 230,000 copies, and within three days there were two million copies of the paper printed and distributed throughout Britain. Other, established, newspapers were severely hampered when printers' unions refused to work when the Strike was first called; but volunteer labour and help from retired printers rallied to produce editions of all the major papers throughout the Strike. The director of The Times argued that the British Gazette's commandeering of one-quarter of his stock of newsprint constituted suppression of a public service. As the Strike progressed it became clear that not only was the Government's





newspaper not necessary, but it deliberately falsified the news. It was, as Lloyd George commented at the time, "a first-rate indiscretion, clothed in the tawdry garb of third-rate journalism."<sup>275</sup>

The General Strike of the British miners and transport workers was a social gesture whose effectiveness had been vitiated by the advance of modern technology and the social restructuring of Britain after the War. As early as 1919 the impact of the newly-equipped private citizen was being felt by organized labour. William McElwee documents this shift in his quotation from the periodical Round Table: "Motor transport is at present far too costly to compete with railway transport, but it has proved its capabilities as a substitute in emergency, and the railwaymen's claim that they could paralyse the community in 24 hours has lost its virtue."<sup>276</sup> This insight, written after the railway strike of 1919, was an accurate forecast of events during the General Strike. L.S. Amery remarked that the General Strike had come thirty years too late. The widely-diffused social extensions of radio and the private automobile had proven the pre-war Sorelian 'myth of the general strike' to be a practical impossibility.<sup>277</sup> Concentrated power—or the threat of power—had been removed from the hands of the workers and distributed on a mass scale throughout the society. The newly-diffused power was controlled by an impersonal, 'democratic' and central management, that of the government:

A great silence descended on the country with the cessation of all but private transport; and the streets running into all the great cities were crowded with walking, bicycling, hitch-hiking office workers who would seek to preserve throughout the standstill the illusion of 'business as usual.'<sup>278</sup>

Julian Symons observed that during the General Strike the question of the British Broadcasting Company's relationship with the government





was dramatically put, "and the Strike became, in one aspect, a struggle on the part of the Company's managing director, John Reith, to preserve its independence."<sup>279</sup> It was in actuality, however, an unfair contest; for the BBC still depended upon the government for its funds and support. Churchill attempted to extend his influence to include BBC operations as well as newspaper coverage of the strike. John Reith and Asa Briggs both give documentary evidence of the government's attempts to compromise the impartiality of the new medium of communication. The BBC was not allowed to broadcast speeches by labour leaders to counterbalance the government's account of the Strike. Again, the Company was forced to delay, by Cabinet intervention, a planned broadcast of the Archbishop of Canterbury's appeal for a just, negotiated settlement of the miners' grievances. Asa Briggs writes of these issues that Reith's "hands had been tied" during the Strike by the interference of the government:

As we have seen, one side had more reason to be grateful [for the settlement] than the other. The BBC not only spread intelligence during the strike: it reinforced authority. Broadcasting could no longer be regarded as a toy. It was a force in national life for good or ill. Again, it was Baldwin who recognized this most clearly. He warmly congratulated Reith and his staff who deserved, he said, 'the greatest credit' for all they had done. Two months later, when the events of May were beginning to fall into place, he added that 'the power of broadcasting triumphantly showed itself in a searching test.'<sup>280</sup>

The General Strike was settled after nine days by a 'formula' struck by a fragmented, unrepresentative General Council negotiating with the government. This formula, which involved reduction of the miners' wages, was in direct conflict with all the miners had stood out for.<sup>281</sup> The leading negotiator for the miners had maintained all along that they would never compromise their demand of "a respectable day's wage for a respectable day's work: not a minute on the day, not a penny off the pay."<sup>282</sup> The formula was reached with no consultation with the miners' representatives.



Returning to the execution of Barney and to Alfred's salvation by 'formula' in The Childermass, we observe that Lewis had concentrated in the Bailiff the central control over the Camp's electro-magnetic environment. Julian Symons reports that the Prime Minister's first radio address to the British public was made during the General Strike. Baldwin ended his speech with these observations on his office and on his function as mediator between the public and the dissidents:

'You placed me in power eighteen months ago by the largest majority accorded to any Party for many, many years. Have I done anything to forfeit that confidence? Cannot you trust me to ensure a square deal to secure even justice between man and man?'

In Symons's description of this occasion we recognize the kind of complex image Lewis has created with his Bailiff. Just before the broadcast, "Baldwin added the last three sentences. Then he struck a match right in front of the microphone, lit his pipe, and began to speak. That striking of the match was an excellent piece of public relations, whether or not deliberately devised."<sup>283</sup> So too the Bailiff, with his pivetta-pacifier-microphone, simultaneously threatens and cajoles the Barney's and Moody's of his Camp.



## CHAPTER THREE

### THE VULGAR STREAK

During the 1930's and 1940's Lewis developed a naturalistic fiction as the vehicle for his satire. The development is perhaps reinforced by his turning to portraiture in his painting during the same period. With the writing of the novel The Vulgar Streak Lewis continued the examination of the will-to-power which he had begun with his studies of Hitler.<sup>1</sup> Now, in 1941, The Vulgar Streak charted in fiction the rise and fall of the power impulse, within a single character. Written with the spare economy of tragic drama, The Vulgar Streak sustained both a satiric and a tragic movement. The motivation of the character Vincent Penhale is transparently correlated with patterns of political and social history, as Europe took on a new war.





## Part I: Introduction

"What are politics, Miss Mallow? Can you tell me? I always think everything is politics. Why, you are politics!"

The novel is extremely carefully written and I feel pretty sure you will be pleased with it. It is a tragedy. I do not know how at a time like this, when people ask for light reading and "escape" literature, it will fare. If there is any place for the tragic, it will at least be at home in a Blitzed society.<sup>2</sup>

Tragedy will be "at home" Lewis suggests, among a people playing out a total transformation of a way of life, uprooted not only by German bomber raids, but by economic, political, and moral pressures from within. The decaying of values of Britain in "the unsanitary trough between the two World Wars"<sup>3</sup> is the theme of much of Lewis's satire. The novels he wrote during this period are humane studies of power, in which the fate of individuals is examined in the context of the action of the State. As Lewis recalled in his 1950 autobiography, Rude Assignment, concern for the quality of the private man's life led him to analyze the institutions governing him:

. . .I have given myself up to the study of the State. With me the first incentive to so unattractive a study was a selfish, or at least a personal one: namely a wish to find out under what kind of system learning and the arts were likely to fare best. A craft interest, that is to say. Of course later my intellectual zeal transcended this limited and specialist inquiry. I saw that human life itself was threatened, in the frenzy of our Party games and economic lunacies. —How do we not think of the State, when it shakes about under our feet, and is no longer able to hold at bay the primitive chaos, man's dread of which is its most obvious, if not its only, excuse for existing?<sup>4</sup>

In my analysis of Lewis's novel The Vulgar Streak, I shall canvas the 'Party games' and 'economic lunacies' satirically woven into the tragedy.

A key feature of Lewis's satiric technique is metamorphosis.

Lewis saw not only that technology was radically transforming human environment, but also that it was at the same time transforming human perception. "Caught very young, a new mankind almost could be made from



one generation to the next. This is highly desirable; only two questions remain; with various solutions—one as to the pattern to be chosen, and the other that of the necessity of violence and force."<sup>5</sup> This vision of the enormous forces for transformation awakening during upheaval recalls the Apocalypse of the Bible. It is a vision omnipresent in Lewis's mind during the writing of The Vulgar Streak, as this letter to Marshall McLuhan suggests:

Knowing England as you do, you are aware how half the people live in a superstitious social eclipse, scarcely venturing to open their poor dumb mouths lest they "drop one aitch". There will be released an immense volume of energy the moment we can uncork in Britain the magic bottle—labelled class. There will be a bad smell at first—how could it be otherwise, after a confinement of a thousand years?<sup>6</sup>

A comment by John Holloway ties together the reanimating force of Lewis's criticism which I have called 'the satire of accommodation' with his technique of metamorphosis:

Lewis knew that decay means transmutation; and perhaps the most admirable thing about his whole achievement as a man was the seemingly intense effort of concentration which he brought to apprehend and register this transmutation, even to accept it, to adapt himself to it, in spite of clear and profound revulsion.<sup>7</sup>

The Vulgar Streak, begun in England in 1939 and completed during the first year of Lewis's exile in North America, is today a book almost impossible to secure. Much of its first and only printing was destroyed during the bombing of Paternoster Row in 1941. It has received little attention from most of Lewis's critics. I choose to give it close attention in this study in order to open the concept of 'the satire of accommodation' in a fictional world of transmutations and to relate it to a longer range view of Lewis's vision of his times.

Ezra Pound, writing of Flaubert's novels, pointed to the remarkable totality of Flaubert's vision of men in a historical context:



Flaubert's circle talked of "contemporary moral history," but in Flaubert's case it might be better to call it social history in this sense, that Flaubert is definitely treating man, or woman, not specifically as to their own insides; by which I don't mean to imply that he neglects their subjectivity, but he is as probably no man before him, concerned with their relation to the whole order of their age.

Continuing his essay, Pound compared the work of Flaubert and Lewis.

Both novelists, he wrote, render 'the order of their age' intelligible; and out of this insight, they can anticipate the future. "Taken in relation to season, Flaubert of 'L'Education' was writing into the débacle of 1870, as Wyndham Lewis in 'The Apes' was writing into the present war."<sup>8</sup> Lewis's sense of his own time and of the future have been commented upon by many of his critics. The following notes from a recent book by Marshall McLuhan face Lewis's painting Portrait of an English-woman, completed in 1914. By analyzing the portrait as both an index to a dead past and as an assemblage of a new technology, McLuhan illuminates the breadth of Lewis's critical vision:

It might well be Miss Prism (a useful index to the fragmented space of the highly literate governing class of the Victorians) right out of Oscar Wilde.

The sitter's mask as a vortex is a processing of personal energy by the new industrial environment.

Sitter as a puppet or servomechanism of the environment.

An assembly of environmental materials: books as head-gun turrets as eyes, nose and throat.<sup>9</sup>

Lewis discussed the problem of determining what is real or true in a time of shifting values and appearances. The good critic must make his determinations and comment upon the forces that make truth so difficult to attain, he wrote. "It is the best way of securing some small redress, and of keeping a limited area clear for the operations of the 'impartial truth' of art and of science."<sup>10</sup> As Lewis wrote in The Writer and the Absolute, 'impartial truth' could not readily be perceived by the mass





of men whose standards of judgement were being aggressively reshaped to suit the needs of particular social organizations:

Politics may, at any moment, bring to an end all serious creative writing, just as religion can. In many times and places politics, as much as religion, have done just that, or prevented it from ever developing. Great literature depends altogether upon unobstructed access to the true—upon licence to make use of the material which appears to the writer to correspond to the truth. Naturally, the ability to perceive the true—which is under everybody's nose but not seen by everybody—is confined to people of considerable intelligence.

The factual is not just what lies there, to be picked up by anyone. It is what is perceived by the wisest—and it at once is and is not, there for the short-sighted 'average man'. Indeed, it does not appear to be the factual at all to the person devoid of insight: or, if you like, there is another factual for him.

Lewis concluded his argument with the observation that where self-interested parties limit the field of vision of society at large, that society is captive. "The present is a private age in-the-making. It is all a question of how long we can fool ourselves, or others, that it is a public age: a public age, in my way of speaking, being a free age."<sup>11</sup> Fragmented man, his ideas compartmentalized by propagandists of every party, no longer knows himself. Ideally, Lewis wrote, the free man would be "the man least specialized, the least stereotyped, the man approximating to the fewest classes, the least clamped into a system — in a word, the most individual."<sup>12</sup>

Each of Lewis's creative works has its provenance in a particular set of features of a social and historical context. This sense of the present in his work is a source of its energy; and Lewis once evoked the spirit of Archimedes to describe the motive power that could be won through an understanding of the present:

So it is that a firm and concrete, totally unromantic, realization of the main features of the Present, gives the man possessing it enormous advantages over others. It is, as it were, the hypothetical ground of the lever of Archimedes. . . .<sup>13</sup>





With a lever long enough and the ground to rest it on, Archimedes said that he could move the world.

"The Art of the Great Race" wittily stated Lewis's case for the present. In this article from his second Blast, written in 1915, Lewis discussed the universality of an art which resists the 'postfabrications' of a conventionalized past. The art of the great race is the art of a "ripe culture" in which "the different elements or races in a people become harmonized." The artist of this great race is a maker of shapes and forms expressive of his age. He is not a partisan of a single system he has inherited from the past. Nor is he a moralizer in an ethical sense, for his creations are not normative in a moral sense. "No grocer talked more or less of his soul, or of his German soul, because of [Bach]. The artist has the same moral influence as the dressmaker. A bird-like hat produces a bird in process of time."<sup>14</sup>

Lewis took as the pretext of his discussion of "The Art of the Great Race" a cliché from the aesthetic movement:

All times equally have witnessed what appears to be a certain snobbish energy of Nature. Like a suburban Matron, men think they catch her plagiarising their fashionable selves. . . . So Wilde eventually accused Nature point-blank of plagiarism. 'Nature imitates Art, not Art Nature.' Let us take up this old aesthetic quip, and set ourselves the light holiday task of blasting it indolently away.<sup>15</sup>

Nature does not 'plagiarise' man's creation, Lewis wrote. Rather, the universal artist of a ripe culture recognizes forms pre-existent in Nature. He identifies, catalogues and arranges them in a witty hieroglyphic<sup>16</sup> or configuration of his own:

Art is not active; it cuts away and isolates. It takes men as it finds them, a particular material, and works at it. It gets the best out of it, and it is the best that it isolates. The worst is still there too, to keep the man in touch with the World, and freer because of the separation. Perfect art insists on this duality, and develops it. It is for this reason and in this way, that the best art is always the nearest to its time, as surely as it is the most independent of it. It



does not condescend to lead. But often, an artist, simply because he takes hold of his time impassively, impartially, without fuss, appears to be a confirmed protester; since that actuality seems eccentric to those who wander and halt.<sup>17</sup>

The artist's creations are so right for his times, Lewis argued, that everywhere "simulacra in flesh of his painted figures will appear as though by magic." All this, he thought, merely goes to prove the "pre-existence of these types, and that the artist only calls together and congregates from the abysses of common life, a hitherto scattered race, in exalting one of its most characteristic types into a literary or artistic canon, and giving it the authority of his special genius."<sup>18</sup>

The culture of Lewis's own time, he wrote, was not 'ripe'. There was no harmony of the mixed elements of society, for there were too few great minds to perceive and broadcast ordered meaning out of the flux of changing forms. Instead, a riot of models and conventions from an outmoded past lent their stifling stability:

You see, in a person's flat, the taste of Paris during the First Empire, and in another person's flat next door, a scheme of decoration neo-Pharaohesque; across the street a dwelling is decorated on the lines of an Elizabethan home. This is known as 'individualism'. Hardly anywhere is there a sign of an 'actual' and contemporary state of mind or consciousness. There is not even an elementary climate and temperamental rightness in current popular Art. All this is because the 'present' is not ripe. There are no 'Futurists' at all (only a few Milanese automobilists). But there are some Primitives of a Future equilibrium.<sup>19</sup>

Lewis clearly attempted in his own work to shape a 'future equilibrium' out of a profound understanding of the present, for "the future possesses its history as well as the past."<sup>20</sup>

In a study of the visual perspective in art and literature, Marshall McLuhan explored the distinction between imitation of the past and illumination of the present. It is, he wrote, the work of the artist to make a new world, not to match it to an old one. "Matching presumes to refer to outer fact; making captures inner fact."<sup>21</sup> We



recall too McLuhan's phrase cited above, in reference to Lewis's exploratory and satiric painting, Portrait of an Englishwoman, "Sitter as a puppet or servomechanism of the environment."<sup>22</sup> McLuhan's speculations on the function of 'counterenvironments' in art help to illuminate the special quality of Lewis's exploratory, 'probing' satire. It is a satire which prepares for the future by exploring the present. "It is important," McLuhan wrote, "to consider the role of the arts and sciences as Early Warning Systems in the social environment. The models of perception they provide can give indispensable orientation to future problems well before they become troublesome." When the real or present world is drawn into art and is transformed, it becomes a 'perceptual probe'. "Environment used as probe or art object is satirical because it draws attention to itself."<sup>23</sup> Finally, McLuhan considered the responsibility of the artist to correct cultural bias:

The function of the artist in correcting the unconscious bias of perception in any given culture can be betrayed if he merely repeats the bias of the culture instead of readjusting it. In fact, it can be said that any culture which feeds merely on its direct antecedents is dying. In this sense the role of art is to create the means of perception by creating counterenvironments that open the door of perception to people otherwise numbed in a nonperceivable situation.<sup>24</sup>

Close examination of the text of The Vulgar Streak uncovers the issues, events and persons Lewis "wrote into" the history of the early years of World War II. Lewis's novel, to use Marshall McLuhan's term, is a 'counterenvironment' to a situation unperceived by many of Lewis's contemporaries. The Vulgar Streak is a concert of ideas and images from an arrested present. "I am a portmanteau-man," Lewis wrote in Blasting and Bombardiering.<sup>25</sup> He was engaged in his works of fiction and criticism in a synthesizing of disparate features of his time, and his art foreshadows the Art of the Great Race he hoped would be man's future culture.





"The Art of the Great Race is always an abstract and universal art, for it is the result of a welding of elements and a synthesis of life."<sup>26</sup>

Pound's phrase, "news that stays new", is an apt description of Lewis's serious art, but Lewis's own robust language can best represent it:

All forms of art of a permanent order are intended not only to please and to excite, believe me, Plain Reader, if you are still there, but to call into play the entire human capacity—for sensation, reflection, imagination, and will. We judge a work of art, ultimately, with reference to its capacity to effect this total mobilization of our faculties. The novel is no exception to this rule. So undoubtedly a work of art, in the full-blooded intellectual sense, is no joke at all, but, from the 'low-brow' standpoint, a rather grim affair; and this in spite of the fact that Gulliver's Travels has been a great success as a nursery story-book, because of all the gwaite big men and the tiny little chappies!<sup>27</sup>

Lewis wrote very early in his career that out of the cheapness and vulgarity around him, the great artist could create 'an image of the accelerated grimace'<sup>28</sup> of his age. "A man could make just as fine an art in discords, and with nothing but 'ugly' trivial and terrible materials, as any classic artist did with only the 'beautiful' and the pleasant. But it would have to be a very tragic and pure creative instinct that achieved this."<sup>29</sup> The rough material of The Vulgar Streak was contemporary politics, and Lewis transformed his material into an art of discords. ". . .having ever with me that Lust zu fabulieren that Goethe speaks about, I have now married the novelist to the philosopher — my fiction is taking me into quarters where politics cannot penetrate. And my politics — like politics as a whole — become more like fiction every day. All this fits in with my particular talents. The times are propitious for me."<sup>30</sup>

I shall be picking out four major designs in interpreting The Vulgar Streak. First I shall examine briefly the fictional account of Vincent Penhale's life in the context of Lewis's ideas of tragedy. Secondly, I shall demonstrate what I consider to be the satiric impact



of the novel, seen in the political history of its time. A comment from one of Lewis's letters is a pointer to this design in the whole pattern. Lewis had been discussing in the letter to this point themes from the novels of Dostoevsky and Stendhal:

My poor hero was another hero of that line. But Mr. Penhale was not an admirer of Hitler as Raskolnikoff. On the contrary: but he slowly comes to realize that the same mal de siècle which afflicts Herr Hitler--the worship of force and action--afflicts him too. His 'heart-to-heart with Mr. Perl' (the title of one of the chapters) is where this enlightenment first comes to him. And in the last chapter but one--that in which his friend Martin sees him for the last time--he explains to his friend what his fault--if not his crime--has been. --In short, Vincent Penhale, though not himself a Fascist, nor yet a Communist, is a child of his time and infected with the disease that as a by-product gives us Fascism.<sup>31</sup>

The figures of Hitler, Oswald Mosley, and Georges Sorel will come into the discussion of this political satire. Thirdly, I shall be examining the economic satire I see working in The Vulgar Streak. An examination of the symbols 'notes', 'pieces of paper', and 'cards', combined with discussion of counterfeiting and hire-purchase suggest that Lewis is critically examining some aspects of the credit theory controversies current at the time. I shall be drawing upon Ezra Pound's speculations on money theory as well in this section of the analysis.

The fourth pattern emerging from the text is suggested in Lewis's letter to H.G. Wells:

I am inclined to attempt to put into fictional form--not as tracts but as living vernacular stories--matter that would help people to realize what snobbish boobies they are, and what a fearful tragedy it is. . .for a young man who has a brain to work with, but no raw material available to put the brain to work on, because he is excluded from such benefits on account of his unsatisfactory origins. --That the capitalist system as worked at present is an iniquity any fool can see: but what we want as well is a more concrete sense of others' sufferings, which we are losing every day at an alarming rate.

The question of class occupied much of Lewis's critical attention. In The Vulgar Streak class plays an important part both in Penhale's fall



and in Lewis's examination of social issues in English society. This letter to Wells concludes with some remarks that help substantiate a view of Lewis not often propounded in studies of his satire:

You will see how appropriate it is, as against power and force. . .to bring forward and reinvigorate this other thing Europeans are so rapidly losing (all ways of that thought and feeling which leads to forbearance, to acts of mercy, to modesty and the advertisements of gentleness rather than of bluster, Bigstickism etc.).<sup>32</sup>

That is, I should like to document in my study the humane side of a satirist too often referred to in the language of pyrotechnics.

Finally, I propose to examine the literary tradition to which The Vulgar Streak belongs. Specific historical details localize the satire in a particular context, but Lewis also universalizes the work. We recall here his statement ". . .the best art is always the nearest to its time, as surely as it is the most independent of it."<sup>33</sup> The association of the novel with the tradition of Stendhal's Le Rouge et le Noir and Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment attest to its independence or universality, as Lewis used these terms. Lewis's examination of the life of Vincent Penhale has been patterned to some extent on these European models of the social novel.

Throughout this study of The Vulgar Streak I shall be canvassing Lewis's technical devices, with special attention to his imagery and structural word-play. These two technical elements of the novel, its metaphoric patterns and structural word-play, work to co-ordinate the designs of Lewis's text.

## Part II: Vincent

"I systematized a great initial blunder, so that anything I touched was absolutely guaranteed to go wrong."<sup>34</sup>





The Vulgar Streak sketches the rise of a social poseur, Vincent Penhale, and then charts his precipitous fall. An escapee from a working-class background, Vincent has been masquerading as a dilettante artist of the upper classes. With a substantial income derived from passing counterfeit bank notes, he moves confidently among a group of wealthy British holidayers in Venice. The time is the autumn of 1938, at the peak of Hitler's war of nerves over Czechoslovakia. Vincent's calculated seduction and marriage to April Mallow mark the summit of his social climb. Returning to London for his father's funeral, Vincent is confident that he has 'legitimized' his position by his marriage to April. Vincent's former associate in the counterfeiting game, Halvorsen, hot-headedly murders one of Vincent's acquaintances who has become suspicious of Vincent's source of income. When Halvorsen is arrested, Vincent is charged as an accessory; and his claim to respectability rapidly evaporates. At this point Vincent begins to appreciate that he has sacrificed real love and humane values in his greed for power. He hangs himself, leaving behind him sardonic messages to the survivors of his world.

The two main settings of the novel have a symbolic value. In the first lines of the first chapter, Lewis describes the unnatural physical structure of Venice. "At the end of the Venetian street were the waters of the Grand Canal. . . ." This note of falsity is emphasized repeatedly. For example, Vincent's friend Martin is struck by the conjunction of beauty and filth in a city whose streets and gutters are one. "Odd to have an architectural paradise established upon a sewage-farm. He sighed—it was a dismal wheeze. Nature made one pay for one's illusion! By associating beauty with bad smells."<sup>35</sup> Again, Martin, "this pocket





Belloc,"<sup>36</sup> dismisses Vincent's sensation of the violence hidden behind the façade of Venice's beauty with the remark that such beauty justifies her crimes.<sup>37</sup> Yet even for Martin, contact with Vincent's sordid intrigue transforms Ruskin's Venice into a "stale beauty."<sup>38</sup>

Lewis describes the romantic beauty of Venice as if his characters were continually before dim Canaletto prints of that city, beloved of the Victorians. Yet her streets harbour violence and dirt. Vincent's London too is a setting of false surfaces and sordid realities. In Lewis's representations of these cities the reader may recognize a sensation Lewis described in his account of a visit to Berlin in the 1930's, in his book The Hitler Cult:

I sped from one Nachtlokal to another; but at every turn, as I moved about the dark and melodramatic streets, I was reminded of the fact that a political disturbance of the first magnitude was in progress, which rivalled, for sheer entertainment, anything the more orthodox 'night-life' could show.

There is something catacomb-like about Berlin at night. In the big, ruined, residential quarters, the streets are imposing chasms—it is not the small decayed gentility of London's unfashionable districts, it is an overwhelming imperialism that has left its great rococo faces of beetling housefronts—a city of effete façades.<sup>39</sup>

The world of the false front belongs typically to the Hollywood western; it is the setting where ugly melodramas are played out.

Lewis describes the Penhale flat in London as a well-groomed island threatened by a flood of sewage. Vincent's apartment, with its neat shrubs and clean colours, set against the dingy waterside of London, is a parodied Walworth Castle:

White-washed, its shutters, doors, and other woodwork painted in a penetrating blue, which picked it out as a smart gentleman's residence among the shabby neighbouring offices and warehouses, it suggested an original taste in the occupier: for who but an original man would choose such a site? Two shrubs standing in white buckets impressed by their beautiful hair-cuts, on either side of the door.

. . . . .  
Madeleine Morse ascended the steps and looked out at the dung-brown flood surging almost immediately beneath her eyes.<sup>40</sup>



From the name Vincent Penhale, we can read a great deal into Lewis's hero. "I was given that first name, redolent of victory," Vincent remarks. "Perhaps it was in mockery."<sup>41</sup> Again, in one of April's cinematic reveries, she thinks of her lover's name. "What a nice name Vincent was. It meant conqueror and she had to admit that Vincent had made a conquest of her all right."<sup>42</sup> The only other member of the Penhale family to stage an escape of sorts from the life of her class is a sister, Victoria, whose Japanese gardener and negro houseboy stamp her as a member of the vulgar rich of Western Canada.<sup>43</sup> The Cornish surname, Penhale, suggests etymologically the title of leader.<sup>44</sup>

In Vincent's passionate drive to escape from 'that dark and tongue-tied multitude,' the English working-class, he manufactures a whole new identity. He takes as his master-model the public school educated gentleman. Vincent is, as he confesses to Martin, adept at acting; but his role has drained him of his selfhood, and he has become only a shadow of a real person:

'In my composition is a great deal of the actor, which was just as well. I possess also a singularly good ear. But still I am a sham person from head to foot. I feel empty sometimes, as if there were nothing inside me. I lied to you at once when I first met you. I began building up a false image of another man than myself. Of someone who was not there. For I am not here. It is not I who am here. And ever since my intercourse with you I have lived inside that empty shell that I began to manufacture.'<sup>45</sup>

Vincent's idée fixe is an 'Inferior Religion' in the terminology of Lewis's The Wild Body. Vincent is obsessed with a stereo-type of upper-class life, and he systematically destroys his personality in aping it. He becomes a puppet to a fetish as do the showman's figures in The Wild Body:

I would present these puppets, then, as carefully selected specimens of religious fanaticism. With their attendant objects or fetishes they live and have a regular food and vitality. They are not creations, but



puppets. You can be as exterior to them, and live their life as little, as the showman grasping from beneath and working about a Polichinelle. They are only shadows of energy, not living beings. Their mechanism is a logical structure and they are nothing but that.<sup>46</sup>

In the novel, Lewis uses imagery to amplify Vincent's awareness of his obsessive behaviour. The most pervasive single metaphor for Vincent is that of the shell. Mr. Perl identifies Vincent's emptiness during the course of their 'heart-to-heart.' "The thing you have been so careful to imitate is empty too. There is that. Very empty. A gentleman. What is a gentleman? It is a word. It is an accent. You identify yourself with something that is not very important."<sup>47</sup> This whole section of the novel is handled with consummate ironic skill, somewhat reminiscent of the Dr. Frumpfsusan passages from the earlier novel The Apes of God. Here, we must remember that it is a shadow person, Vincent Penhale, who is going to be psychoanalyzed. Mrs. Mallow's gushing praise of the Viennese expert sets the mock-serious tone for the interview to come:

'...oh, well he calls himself a psychiatrist, but he is a very intelligent fellow. . .no, silly, not to be psychoanalysed, just to have someone outside yourself tell you what you look like from the outside . . .that may be so though it has not been my experience that actors are very objective about themselves. . . . Telephone him at once and say you wish to consult him—say I'm your mother-in-law, say you want a Heart-to-heart. . . . The visit to Mr. Perl will make a new man of you. He will turn you inside out.'<sup>48</sup>

By the end of the novel, Vincent takes a 'dispassionate peep' at himself and pronounces himself hollow at the core.<sup>49</sup> The account of his suicide reinforces the theme. "There, hanging from the disused gas-suspension in the middle of it, was Mr. Penhale, his tongue protruding, and his face black. A piece of white paper, in the manner of a placard, was attached to his chest." This label attached to the pendant Vincent reads as follows:

'Whoever finds this body, may do what they like with it.  
I don't want it.  
Signed. Its former inhabitant.'<sup>50</sup>





Reviewing these stages of Vincent's gradual awakening to his condition, one recognizes that Lewis has poised his novel on the fine point between comedy and tragedy. Much of Vincent's obsessive behaviour has the flavour of Lewis's comedy; it is the quality of a thing behaving as if it were a person.<sup>51</sup> The puppets of Lewis's fiction are "congealed and frozen into logic, and an exuberant hysterical truth." Vincent fails to perceive that he has transformed himself into a machine. It is a machine which merely goes through the empty rituals of soul-searching and having a 'heart-to-heart.' The anatomy of these puppets is one feature of Lewis's satire. "This 'Realism' is satire. Satire is the great Heaven of Ideas, where you meet the titans of red laughter; it is just below intuition, and life charged with black illusion."<sup>52</sup> We are only aware of this ludicrous side of Vincent's behaviour when we adopt the cold eye of the narrator and view the scene with objectivity. It is, for example, an icily ironic eye that records this observation at the end of Vincent's dramatic revelation of his 'crime.' "Penhale paused — as if searching in what he was laying bare for something he wanted to find. He seemed to abandon the search."<sup>53</sup>

Lewis wrote of the difficulties the satirist always encounters in the execution of his 'cold' art. The satirist had come to be regarded as the supreme cad of the arts. I have examined in my introduction to this study his objections to the pseudo-moralist's rejection of analytical satire. At this point in the reading of The Vulgar Streak, I should like to return to Lewis's ideas on the impersonality of satiric laughter. "Perfect laughter," he wrote, "if there could be such a thing, would be inhuman. And it would select as the objects of its mirth as much the antics dependent upon pathologic maladjustments, injury, or disease, as



the antics of clumsy and imperfectly functioning healthy people."<sup>54</sup> Neither laughter nor tragedy is to be found at a stage of perfection in human sensibilities, however. "Art cannot be 'tragic' in the intense fashion of life, without ceasing to be art."<sup>55</sup> Somewhere between the totally subjective nihilism of pure tragedy and the unlimited energy for synthesis in 'perfect laughter,' the satirist is at work. The laughter that Lewis is provoking in his study of Vincent Penhale is an "anti-toxin of the first order."<sup>56</sup> It is a specific against any thoroughgoing sentimental involvement with the piteous elements of Vincent's fall.

The imagery of clothing reinforces Lewis's treatment of the appearance-reality disjunction in the novel. Like the city of Venice, Vincent is always on show. A designer of costumes for theatrical performances, he knows how to put appearances to work for him. However little left behind the façade, the casual viewer does not penetrate the disguise. "The picture represented a scene in Venice when this extinct showplace—a godsend to Thomas Cook—was alive with passion and intrigue. It revealed what underlay the formal beauty, which to-day alone remains, like a splendid ball-dress once worn by a mistress of great princes."<sup>57</sup> Even Vincent's flat, with its valet, "just for advertisement,"<sup>58</sup> stands out as a clipped and painted parvenu in its dingy setting. Vincent quite consciously follows his "recipe for distinction"<sup>59</sup> when he puts aside the "scarecrow outfit of the labouring poor"<sup>60</sup> to assume the dress of a gentleman. His dress is rather more a disguise than it is real clothing, however. Vincent knows that his own body is a "tame animal kept for hunting,"<sup>61</sup> and he outfits it in the best costume to suit his aims. "When we're once more clothed and in our right minds," he tells April after sensually bathing with her in the Adriatic, "we can go to Farrario's



for lunch."<sup>62</sup> The imagery of clothing and of nakedness pervades Vincent's picture of himself. He speaks of having been born "denuded of every advantage."<sup>63</sup> Again, as Vincent prepares to expose the humble origin that lies beneath his manufactured shell of dress, manners, and speech, he is compared to a priest "on the point of being defrocked."<sup>64</sup>

Speech is the second subject in Vincent's curriculum for the formation of a new identity. One whole chapter is given over to his schooling of his sister Maddie in the arts of proper English pronunciation. April reacts dimly but negatively to the sound of Vincent's odd friend Halvorsen:

'You don't want me here, Vin,' it said—oh, in such a vile north-country accent—such as blighted the scenery in the villages near Harrogate.

. . . . .  
April shuddered at the impact of this voice. . . . A dreadful common accent, a common-and-proud-of-it sort. The worst sort of all.<sup>65</sup>

A single comment from Mrs. Mallow serves to represent the speech-obsession of the class Vincent has trained himself to ape. The scene is the dinner party at Previtali's, and an Italian waiter has just spoken in English to Mrs. Mallow. As the genteel English party leave the hotel Mrs. Mallow says, "There is nothing I deprecate so much as colloquialism in a Wop!"<sup>66</sup> Lewis has invested in this remark a savagery that the reader cannot ignore. The force of the epithet for the Italian obliterates any gentility in the fastidious choice of words and tone of aggrieved noblesse oblige. The quality of this remark makes Vincent's account of his escape more credible:

'Last of all I understood about my voice: that was the last and worst of my evil discoveries how the way in which I spoke my mother-tongue, however much I might disguise myself in beautiful clothes, would betray me.'<sup>67</sup>

'I grew up in that poisonous air, of class-discrimination: of the superstition of class like a great halter around one's neck—in which my very tongue was branded as if I were a despised property.'<sup>68</sup>





Vincent learned early that he had to parrot the speech of the public schools if he were to succeed; and like the parrot, he would "select his words with deadly effect."<sup>69</sup> The parrot image is cruelly altered by the end of the novel, where Vincent is no longer in control of his fate. "He felt uneasy in his exposed position—like a parrot up in a cage, making loud remarks he did not understand, but knowing he did not understand them. A most luckless sort of parrot."<sup>70</sup> Vincent's strategy of parroting his social betters is no more than a means to an end for him, however. He shows only contempt for his speech models and prides himself on his successfully breaking through their barriers. "It's just perversity, put it down to that," he says of his friendship with Martin Penny-Smythe, "I like people to stammer."<sup>71</sup> For both Vincent and Maddie, the mouth is a vulnerable and sensitive area, warm flesh opening in elaborate social masks.

Vincent took her pale statuesque face, with its sad red lips, in his hands, and kissed her cheek. She gave his arm a quick squeeze, and stood back, with the same absence of expression, almost wooden—but withal sensitively-carved. . . .

'Vincent,' she said, and stopped. The impassive, bloodless face began to writhe a little at the mouth, then suddenly, it broke up and went to pieces.<sup>72</sup>

Significantly, Vincent threatens to attack Maddie's "Clubman Beau," the wealthy Fascist Dougal Tandish, by beating his mouth to a pulp.<sup>73</sup> As Vincent remarked ironically, "The poor are afraid of words."<sup>74</sup> He never really escapes this fear, for he is under a constant strain to maintain the look and sound of the rich.

Beginning with the first chapter, "Two Strolling Men," the figure of the actor predominates in the novel. Vincent is as handsome and self-possessed as a film-star creating a role on the movie screen. "He smiled at her—as a matter of fact he leered at her. For her benefit,





he allowed such odds and ends of Screen star assets as he was aware of possessing—his teeth were good, and his eyes 'fine'—sociably to flower, upon the bronzed background of his face, and was gratified with the effect. She was certainly a responsive young woman."<sup>75</sup> With his taste for untruth and his ability to feign emotion almost at will, Vincent is continually acting, so that finally he scarcely can know himself. He plays his chosen part consummately well, for Martin cannot take Vincent's confession seriously, and sees only a nightmarish impersonator of his gentleman friend standing in Vincent's place. "In spite of everything, Martin clung to his picture of the gentleman. The picture of his friend as he had always thought of him from the start. He would not have this boulder thrust upon him—as in a spirit of mischief Vincent seemed determined that he should."<sup>76</sup>

Vincent's taste for theatrics is a strategy of self-defence which has grown into an instinctive pattern of behaviour. By acting any number of roles as conditions and opportunities change, Vincent is obeying the primitive survival code. This code Lewis describes elsewhere as, for example, in "The Code of a Herdsman":

(18) Above all this sad commerce with the herd, let something veritably remain 'un peu sur la montagne.' Always come down with masks and thick clothing to the valleys where we work.

Stagnant gasses from these Yahooesque and rotten herds are more dangerous often than the wandering cylinders that emit them. See that you are not caught in them without your mask.<sup>77</sup>

It is a code that promises only survival, and it is one which guarantees nothing regarding the moral condition of the survivor.

As an actor, Vincent has his costume, makeup, and speech carefully co-ordinated. But they fail him when he is no longer in control of his situation. When, for example, he is confronted by the police in Venice, Vincent's mask crumples. "He had become so pale that his tan looked



unreal of a sudden: a make-up upon the face of a corpse, or some ghastly sun-tan out of a bottle upon the face of a sick actor who has to play a hearty part."<sup>78</sup> As fate unmask itself<sup>79</sup> before the bewildered April, Vincent knows that he cannot reverse the direction of events. "I shall keep playing my part—with a great deal of panache—a great deal of clatter. There is nothing else for me to do. But this parole is an interlude, no more than that."<sup>80</sup>

Vincent is an actor who must be continually in action. The last supper he shares with Martin draws together the two sides of his dynamism: actor as player and actor as one who is active. "My acting is a form of action—not of make-believe. I have attempted, haven't I, to act my way out of a predicament. . . . I have never been a real actor. It would have been better if I had been more of an artist."<sup>81</sup> Vincent is enchanted by action. He is attracted by the flashing blue eyes and ruddy skin that are the signs of an enormous vitality in Bill Halvorsen, that "unspeakable Viking."<sup>82</sup> Halvorsen's contrast to the vapid Mallows is very marked:

'Hush!' Vincent was stopping him evidently from "shooting off" his "great fat mouth." April shuddered, as she stuck on the stamps. The fellow had a voice like a can-opener. It was an instrument of the will. He forcibly burst things open with it when they stood in his way. It could still be heard gouging away, Vincent laughing his crowing applause of whatever this charming friend of his was saying.

. . . . .  
'Have you examined the tombs of the Venetian patriarchs?' Vincent asked Mrs. Mallow, with a condescending boredom, as if he had switched off a very thrilling record to take place in a dull tea-party chat. 'Been to San Zanipolo?'<sup>83</sup>

Caught in a trance of action, Vincent is evidently bored by the prospect of a war fought with the tools of modern technology. His is a romantic temperament designed for spear-warfare. "There will always be wars. Modern war I feel a little superior to. It's not heroic enough



for me. . . .I should like a war fit for heroes to fight in. . . .I don't call machine-minding fighting!"<sup>84</sup> Again, as the guests and staff at the hotel grow tense and morose with the worsening of the Czechoslovakia crisis, "the only person who seemed completely immune from these influences was Vincent Penhale."<sup>85</sup>

Dynamism and the will to change are part of his Inferior Religion. At any time when he feels trapped by circumstances he seeks a path to action, like a rat caught in a maze.<sup>86</sup> "'I'm all for changing things,'" he remarks to his brother.<sup>87</sup> Vincent's mind is like that of a wild animal, governed by instinct and conditioned by patterns of repeated action. "' . . .bring kinetics into play. There's no memory system so good as one rooted in movement,'" he urges his sister during their elocution lesson.<sup>88</sup>

Vincent's dynamism is in fact of a rather specious variety. Like the rat in a maze or the wild animal responding unreflectively to some stimulus, Vincent acts aimlessly. Lewis links his character with that of Hamlet. Like Hamlet, Vincent is obsessed with a desire to assemble a viable role for himself out of the shoddy fragments of a corrupt world. Like Hamlet too, Vincent is at once fascinated and paralyzed by the need for action and change.<sup>89</sup> April romantically imagines Vincent's father to have been a great actor, a "to-be-or-not-to-be Knight."<sup>90</sup> Vincent, with his fabricated identity crumbling about him, chooses not to be. During the course of his 'confession' to Martin, Vincent admits that he may have taken himself too seriously in setting about to escape from his class. "'Oh, I suppose I dramatize it yes. What else can one do with such a thing? . . . The actor who plays all the time the Prince of Denmark, in the end is more Hamlet than anything else. I am by now





what I seem."<sup>91</sup> In The Art of Being Ruled Lewis used the Hamlet figure as an emblem of the moral paralysis afflicting a society confronting the mesmerizing power of technological transformation:

. . . radical transformation is what the most typical modern thought envisages. 'Philosophy can only be an effort to transcend the human condition,' Bergson has said; and Nietzsche proposed some sort of biologic transformation no doubt with his superman. Do you want to be a superman? Do you want to be a god? That is the question! Does 'conscience' make cowards of us all, as Hamlet asserted?<sup>92</sup>

This real moral paralysis underlying Vincent's show of dynamism helps rationalize his remark, "'It's odd how I strike all my friends as a born man of action.'"<sup>93</sup> In The Vulgar Streak Vincent became obsessed with a pseudo-revolutionary cliché, the verbal counter 'class.' The very meaning of this word modulates significantly as the novel develops, and Vincent's spurious revolutionary spark dies out. He is left cold, black and lifeless.

Mr. Perl enlightens Vincent on the subject of class when he comments, "'There is no real class in England proper. I have told you. You are all in a conspiracy to defeat class. Real class.'"<sup>94</sup> This distinction between "class" meaning social standing, and "class" meaning quality, is vital to the novel. Vincent did not recognize this distinction. "'I systematized a great initial blunder, so that anything I touched was absolutely guaranteed to go wrong,'" he tells Martin.<sup>95</sup> Awareness of this distinction rationalizes those critical scenes in the novel where Vincent recognizes that he has betrayed both his sister and his wife in the pursuit of an empty dream.<sup>96</sup>

Lewis intensifies the verbal ambiguity in the novel by playing on a third meaning for the word 'class.' Vincent plays a schoolmaster in his shaping of his own life and that of his sister Maddie. He was his own best pupil, as he comments to Martin:



'Born in the gutter, as the expression goes (I was not romantically conceived at Tintagel, as I pretended, but pupped a few feet above one of the dirtiest gutters of Poplar), I taught myself to speak and act like this. As you see me doing, in this beautiful and polished way. Now I speak the same language as you. Once I spoke another tongue almost. No mean feat, you must agree. To teach myself Sanscrit and Hebrew would not have been more labour.'<sup>97</sup>

In his family's parlour after the funeral of his father, Vincent propounds the doctrine of forsaking one's accustomed language and adopting the speech of the well-to-do. "'Must pick the jolly old g's up, Harry. Just as important as the aitches. That's the way our rulers wanted us to speak, I know. That's no reason to oblige them and go on speaking Kitchen English, or Pub English. . . . Why don't you and Flo,' Vincent asked his brother. . . 'allow me to give you a lesson or two in the proper way to speak? You'd never regret it.'"<sup>98</sup> Continuing his lecture, Vincent carefully abjures any snobbish motivation for his plan:

'Maddie is not a snob,' Vincent said. 'She just doesn't accept the handicaps fate has imposed on her as you do. You shouldn't persecute her. You're very hostile both to her and to me, without any reason. But I won't stand by and see her sneezed at because she picks up her G's and puts her aitches in the right place.'

. . . . .  
'Remember, Flo,' he said. 'It isn't snobbish to talk the way I do. It's assisting to perpetuate all the snobbery in England to go on talking the way you do.'<sup>99</sup>

By force of his will, Vincent transforms his sister Maddie into a 'lady.' His power over her is extraordinary. Like a Victorian figure of family authority, he dominates in the class room. "They gave the impression of two people engaged in a séance; a séance in which one was subjecting the other to his will, as if in the case of an entranced medium and a hypnotist. Vincent, of course, was the hypnotist."<sup>100</sup> Vincent's will to change is the governing factor in the relationship of teacher to pupil, and it is his energy, born of ambition, that keeps Maddie at her lessons:



Maddie sighed heavily.

'Dougal is a very "nice-spoken gentleman," Vincent, as Mother would call it,' she smiled wanly. 'It's like going to have a lesson more than anything else, when I have a date with Dougal Tandish.'

.....  
'But it is just like that, Vincent. Really it is. It's hard work what's more. Often it gives me a headache. I get terrible headaches sometimes. I took three aspirins after our Bucking Horse lesson. . . .'<sup>101</sup>

There are many suggestions in the novel that at her most successful personification of a 'lady', Maddie has become a dead thing. She is referred to continually as a mask, a statue, and a pale monument.<sup>102</sup> Despite her statuesque beauty, red lips and fashionable Gypsy costume, Maddie under Vincent's spell is not a real woman at all. "The perfection of beauty, hearing itself denounced as barren, broke up its features into a hideous mask of grief."<sup>103</sup>

Vincent had confessed the pleasure he took in moulding the human clay of his own youthful self. In reshaping Maddie, he has again imposed an image on a pliant medium. But the initial image was a weak one, and the mould will not wear:

'But look, Mad, I have been all wrong. I put you up to a lot of things that are. . .oh, unsound. Forget about all that.'

The girl's eyes were wide open with amazement, the mask began to writhe at the lips. He saw the sister he had loved so much and worked on like a sculptor with his clay, breaking up beneath his eyes, as a result of his assault upon her dream. He remembered how he had seen the same thing occurring with April. . . .<sup>104</sup>

The transformation of a slum-girl into a well-spoken 'lady' recalls Shaw's Pygmalion. Vincent's relationship with his sister is that of a showman with a prize display. Lewis reverses the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea, however. Vincent transforms a live woman into a statue, "a defunct Infanta."<sup>105</sup> He can do no more than admonish his Galatea to seek out a real man for her re-animation. "Now, Mad, go find a proper man. And don't worry, Mad, my sweet, if he jettisons a few silly old aitches."<sup>106</sup>





There exists between brother and sister a bond of great durability, formed by their sensitive awareness of common origins. "The relentless pressure of the English class incubus had poisoned the existence of one as much as of the other. A morbid condition obtained in both cases: both had suffered a deep infection."<sup>107</sup> Vincent's imperiousness and self-dramatizing gradually alienate him from his sister. "How hard you are, Vincent!"<sup>108</sup> Although both share the bond of oppression, their responses to it are quite different. Perhaps their names, Vincent born for victory and Madeleine born for tears, are emblematic of the quality of these responses:

In some ways, however, this mask of a girl, with her static face, served as a key to her brother—who was not so unsolemn as all that himself. In spite of the fact that he made such an active and, as it were, over-deliberate use of his personality, and went suavely smiling through his mortal part, he was born to the tragic roles as much as she. They were very near together in some respects, these two. Both took life with such a black seriousness at bottom. Everything that happened to them set up so dark a tension. One covered up with a masculine veneer, of fearless laughter. The other faced life unsmiling and unwinking, with great dark rounded eyes that looked like shock-absorbers for something much more lively and sensitive within.<sup>109</sup>

Madeleine, gazing back with stately resignation at Vincent's savage glare, has the passive strength of one made for endurance. Her brother, like the moth dashing itself into a flame, is marked for destruction.

Vincent's aggressive use of his personality cannot disguise the fact that, in parroting an insipid model, he has lost whatever share of genuine vitality he had. Further, since the only motives for his actions were hatred and ambition, he has limited himself as a person. Lewis discussed the effects of class or race hatred in his Paleface: The Philosophy of the Melting-Pot, published in 1929. He argued that the social or political status secured by 'underdogs' at the expense of their humanity, was apt to be a Pyrrhic victory:





Political independence is the gift of a society, whereas independence of character, or the being a person, is a gift of nature, to put it shortly. That gift is held throughout natural life, irrespective of function. A person can only be 'free' in the degree in which he is a 'person': and if the most potentially effective and the wisest members of a given society are obscured or rendered ineffective, then it can only mean that that society is about to perish. . . .<sup>110</sup>

Again, Lewis saw in Shakespeare's work a critical examination of the doctrine of action. The action principle Lewis opens to scrutiny in his works is that propounded in various guises, by Machiavelli, by the futurist Marinetti, and by the existentialist writers Malraux and Sartre. A political or social theoretician who holds out the promise of 'escape through action' must be observed closely.<sup>111</sup>

Lewis speculated in a preface to a book on madness in Shakespearean heroes, that tragic heroes in the plays were maddened by their obsession with a goal or ambition. The hero is in some way aware of a force limiting his development or holding back the social liberties of his fellows, he argued:

The isolation, in the mind, of one idea (to the exclusion of everything that surrounds and modifies it in the universe) is characteristic of most madness. But there is such a thing, I should like to contend, as shakespearean madness. . . for the idea that is isolated can obviously be either a stupid idea or an intelligent one; and what certainly characterizes 'shakespearean madness' is that almost invariably it is a noble and generous one. . . . And this madness is the result, usually, of their realization of some besetting depravity or falseness in the general world of men, which threatens, or condemns to futility, some specific hope, or 'wish', of their more ardent, more sensitively equipped natures.<sup>112</sup>

Lewis's speculations on the sensitive awareness of the agent of a tragedy are relevant to his creation of the character of Vincent Penhale. We see in The Vulgar Streak this same criticism of activism, combined with an analysis of a type of madness. Vincent is sensitively aware of a real social iniquity, but he goes mad when he distorts himself into a fifth columnist in the decaying bastion of the wealthy classes. As Mr. Perl



observes, "If you imitate—if you ape someone who is mad for a long time, you are bound to appear mad yourself. But I think you are mad too."<sup>113</sup>

Early in the novel Lewis introduced an incident that documents a kind of hysteria in Vincent's character. The narrator of this passage assumes Vincent's point of view in describing a Guardi painting:

A sinisterly darkened apartment, into which a crowd of small masked figures had just poured themselves, gathered in a dark palaver. They had gone aside into this empty room in some tarnished palace, to set up a dark whisper. Then later, when the maskers had dispersed, probably in a moonlit salizzade or streetlet, a long dagger would flash, a little masked figure would fall, crumpling up like a puppet. . . .

[Vincent] eyed bleakly the painted scene: the only sensation of which he was conscious was fear. He felt personally involved in the plots of these masked and nameless beings of disintegrating pigment, as if they had been plotting against him.<sup>114</sup>

One notes in this passage the hysteric's guilty fear that he is under constant threat of exposure. At another stage of the novel, Lewis employs this technique again, projecting a surrealist fantasy into the guilty consciousness of a character. During the ride to the cemetery for the burial of her father, Madeleine sees an old horse lying in a pool of blood by the side of the road. "The sight had shocked her into a distortion—into blaming somebody. The pathos of the great blood-stained horse—struggling to live, his giant muscles striking out for it, in feeble stampings of the air—had torn away the screens behind which human death is enacted off-stage, its reality sublimated." Her thoughts flash to a picture of her father's death, as the old man dies flailing about in a fever. "The tears fell faster under the veil, as the dying horse stained her mind with its blood like a terrible sunset, where a moment before she had been unconscious of anything except the rain, and the general greyness and senselessness of life, and the smell of Amy."<sup>115</sup>

In both examples of this technique, Lewis is extrapolating a fantastic



reverie from a character's experience of the real world. The form and quality of these reveries indicate the mood of Vincent and Maddie. In the mind of each there is a hysterical insecurity. Typically, the leading figures in Lewis's novels are remarkably self-controlled in their behaviour, governed by an indomitable will. Quick glimpses into their thoughts, however, reveal the hysteria that is coupled with this rigidity.<sup>116</sup>

The Vulgar Streak is a novel of metamorphosis. Lewis's characters, as we have seen, hysterically transform the ordinary objects of their environment into the properties of guilt fantasies. There is another, complementary pattern of transformations in the novel. This pattern amplifies the narrative development. During the course of this analysis of the novel, some of these transmutations have already been observed. For example, we have examined the break-up of Madeleine's immobile mask into an expressive human face. Vincent sketched his own transformation from a slum-boy destined for service, to the well-connected gentleman artist we find strolling the quais of Venice at the beginning of the novel.

As the novel develops Vincent undergoes a metamorphosis of a much darker aspect. At the peak of his effectiveness, when he has created a place for himself, Vincent is a healthy man full of animal vitality and younger seeming than his years.<sup>117</sup> This physical attractiveness and vitality make him a leader. He explains to Martin that a prepossessing physical style will elevate one man into a position of power over others:

'I do what would be called "dominate" you, to some extent, don't I? Well, leaving out of count all the other odds and ends that go to the making of friendship between two men, and of what gives one the mastery over the other, our relationship would have had quite a different pattern had I possessed a tubby, undistinguished presence, such as yours, and had you been tall and well-proportioned, possessed of the physical beauty that





is undeniably mine. I should then have followed you as now you follow me.<sup>118</sup>

As a physical type, Vincent has much of the romantic film-star hero in his make-up, and his attentions are enough to melt any resistance April might have. Mrs. Mallow observes, "'The man who likes her must be jolly fond of icicles. . . . But she will melt one of these days. Then there'll be a bit of a mess. I frankly dread that moment."<sup>119</sup>

Vincent's initial vitality was inspired by class-hatred, the "'have-not' doctrine of action-and-damn-the-consequences."<sup>120</sup> But his precipitous social rise was not achieved in a moral vacuum. Vincent has played the gadfly in the established social order, exercising his will with a demonic disregard for the consequences of his actions. The social order will take its revenge, through the law. Vincent is confronted on the proximate emotional plane by the wrecked dreams of April and Madeleine. The effect of this confrontation with reality is immediate. His vitality sapped, he becomes a lifeless and inert object. ". . .there was a step in the hall outside—an ominous step, like that of a heavier man than Vincent: but the door opened, and it was Vincent that stood there."<sup>121</sup> With fingers like icicles, pale and shivering,<sup>122</sup> a dead thing has replaced the vital Vincent:

Vincent also had undergone a subtle change. This, perhaps was the worst feature of the situation. [Martin] had always been in the habit of feeding upon Vincent's vitality. At the first suck that he took, with his stammering lips, he found the source was dry. Vincent made no effort to dazzle him, or to assert what he had once described as his 'mastery' over him. Like a party at which each guest has to bring his own drink, Martin realized at once that he would have to supply his own vitality.<sup>123</sup>

Throughout the novel, Vincent's face is transmuting in one specific feature. After the murder of Dougal Tandish, Halvorsen draws attention to a change in Vincent's face. "'For Christ's sake stop fumbling with that budding Blimp on your lip!"<sup>124</sup> Again, Halvorsen



scowls at Vincent, "You're not funny. It's the way you wear your hair—on your upper lip."<sup>125</sup> April's reaction to this change in Vincent's appearance is just as strong. "I wish you'd shave that off! . . . It makes you look. . . I don't know how to put it. . . Villains always have moustaches!"<sup>126</sup>

The significance of this transformation in Vincent is amplified by still another metamorphosis. A prominent feature in Vincent's studio-throne room is his "grandiose, and quite superfluous, easel."<sup>127</sup> By the time Vincent has been exposed as a counterfeiter and accessory in Dougal's murder, the murderous superficiality of his worship of action is also quite clear. As April waits for his return to the studio, the scene darkens. "The towering easel that served no purpose, except to impress, threw a giant shadow: a rectangular black skeleton sprawled upon the opposite wall and the painted ceiling."<sup>128</sup> The final stage of this transformation is seen in the melancholy last supper Vincent and Martin take together:

The cold meal of canned foods; the gloom of the large pillared room; the great futile easel, like the skeleton of a pre-historic bird, stuck up in the half-lit backgrounds bare of furniture, projecting its menacing shadow; the consciousness that they were alone in this house by the river . . . all contributed to make this one of the most unpleasant experiences of his life.<sup>129</sup>

The image of Vincent emerging through these transmutations is of a man possessed by naked will, "his personal dictator,"<sup>130</sup> in Mr. Perl's phrase. (We recall here as well Vincent's jest at Hitler, the furious Führer.<sup>131</sup>) The destruction of this figure is presided over by a great black bird, the symbol of a transformed art and emblem of German Imperialism.<sup>132</sup> The conflation of the mutant leader and bird creates a new and prophetic symbol. Vincent is found hanging "in the Hall," a blackened suicide with a claw-like hand.<sup>133</sup>



In my analysis of features of the political satire of The Vulgar Streak I shall explore in greater depth the parallels between Vincent's cult of action and that of Hitler. But to conclude this examination of Vincent's role in the narrative, I should like to quote from a later work of Lewis's which reinforces my comments on the tragic irresponsibility of Vincent's doctrine of action:

Here you see in this escape through action theory none other than J.-P. Sartre's conception of Freedom. How this action theory of 'imposing your personality upon the world' may very easily develop into a quite substantial power-complex may be judged by pondering these further words of Malraux's. 'To lead, to be he who decides, to coerce. That is to live!' Those ways of feeling are contagious, who can doubt? How many people were there in Western Europe between the wars nursing feverish power-complexes, besides the Duces and the Führers? Malraux's account of his own power-impulses represented them as an escape from Nothingness—on the part of a 'nihilistic' and 'negative' thinker—would not some such formula have accommodated Hitler very well? The filling of a void with shouting crowds, and trampling feet, by a man who was convulsively wrenching himself out of Nothingness?<sup>134</sup>

In this connection, Martin takes his leave with a significant gesture. "Martin threw up his hand in a clumsy salute—half-wave, half oath of allegiance."<sup>135</sup>

### Part III: Politics

The Hitler Cult is almost a satire upon us. What, then, are we—the satirized? Or, if you prefer to put it that way, have we deserved Hitler—or is Hitler an unreasonable caricature of our enormities?<sup>136</sup>

Even if the reader could ignore the insistent clamour of the newspaper headlines Lewis has introduced into the text of The Vulgar Streak, Lewis's careful detailing of the place and time of the opening suggests that the events of his story are closely linked to contemporary political history. Features of Vincent's life are picked up point for point in Lewis's political allegory. This objective correlative gives the work a satiric thrust to reinforce the emotional impact of the





narrative tragedy. The Vulgar Streak arouses both an emotional response on the tragic plane and an intellectual response on the satiric. In Lewis's phrase, it provides a 'total mobilization of all the faculties.'<sup>137</sup> Lewis plays his readers' awareness of the inevitability of Vincent's destruction against our anger at the stupidity behind that destruction. This tense interplay between the affective and the dis-affective in Lewis's work has been noted by Hugh Kenner. Here Kenner discussed the impact of another of Lewis's novels, close to The Vulgar Streak in time and theme:

By the logic of Lewis's antecedent career, The Revenge for Love, sacrificing the normal local energy of his prose in an attempt to key the writing down to real people whom he doesn't really grasp as people, should have been a dismal bore. By some unforeseeable miracle of equilibrium it is instead a great novel. It is at last the almost perfect articulation of a vision, poised and paradoxically quiet, though the vision is what Lewis has elsewhere called "the black material of social truth": Nietzsche's and Machiavelli's vision of the world as a void informed by mere power.<sup>138</sup>

T.S. Eliot discussed the function of the 'objective correlative' in his essay on Hamlet. "The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked."<sup>139</sup> Lewis offers with his external approach to writing a point of view for both writer and reader that is free from the weaknesses he identified as those of the approach from within. He chooses the permanence of space over the flux of time. "[Space is] by far the greater reality of the two, and Time is meaningless without it. Time as change was the 'Nothing' of the Greek, and it is ours."<sup>140</sup> To oppose the flux, Lewis set up the concrete as his medium of expression. He translated





the materials of art into objects for the observing eye. Having created units of perception, he manipulates them before the eyes of the reader in some carefully-organized set of movements as a visual representation of ideas, of attitudes, and of significant gestures. He bases his technique on the image, a metaphoric surrogate for what is seen:

. . . we wish to repose, and materially to repose, in the crowning human sense, the visual sense; and if it meant that we refuse (closing ourselves in with our images and sensa) to retire into the abstraction and darkness of an aural and tactile world, then it is true that our philosophy attaches itself to the concrete and radiant reality of the optic sense.<sup>141</sup>

The artist seeks stability and concreteness, without which "you lose not only the clearness of outline, the static beauty, of the things you commonly apprehend; you lose also the clearness of outline of your own individuality which apprehends them."<sup>142</sup>

Many physical details in Lewis's text which 'evoke' emotional states function too in the satiric configuration of the work. It can be demonstrated that Lewis has structured his novel partly on a framework of generic puns and images which interweave historical and fictional detail. I shall be demonstrating in particular the several functions of the 'scap of paper', the artist's easel, the birds, and the faces or masks in the novel. These physical details, as I have noted already, undergo significant transformations in Lewis's development of the themes of the novel. Related to this whole shifting world of physical reality is a thorough-going pattern of word-play. By means of punning, Lewis released the energy of multi-faceted words. The metamorphosis of meanings for 'class' and 'actor' are notable instances of this word-play. Lewis has also built important suggestions into the names of his major characters. The names April Mallow and Martin Penny-Smythe, for example, repay close attention.



'It is obvious, Vincent, that you suffer to a morbid degree from. . . I wonder if you know it, you who have the analytic mind? From an excess of Will.'

'Ah!'

'Your will is so powerful that it drives you along like a relentless tyrant. You have a sort of personal dictator (to parody 'personal devil') inside you.'

. . . . .  
'Of course, Mussolini and Hitler what are they, but extreme, and curiously disagreeable, expressions of this morbid Will. Devils they are not, so much as diabolical machines of empty will.'<sup>143</sup>

The language Mr. Perl uses in this diagnosis of Vincent's mal de siècle<sup>144</sup> echoes Lewis's own comments on Hitler. "Physically, he is an insignificant blur. My view is that he is like that all through, as regards texture; but that a dynamo — or if you prefer a demon — has got inside him somehow. A mechanical activity of unusual drive has to be reckoned with; but that does not affect the quality of the mind that is driven."<sup>145</sup> These 'diabolical machines of empty will' or 'dynamos' are emblems for men obsessed by action. Vincent Penhale's dynamism has already been discussed. Similarly Lewis described the National Socialists under Hitler as men who respond instinctively to events, creatures of circumstance who "are their milieu, nothing more."

They acted. They were endowed with a furious and vindictive will — to purge, stop the rot, build (hurriedly) anew. Someone just had to do something, no matter very much how or even what. There was not much time to think. If you are the right sort of man, why think anyway? . . . So let us dispense with a lot of unnecessary theoretical cackle! That seems to sum up the attitude of Dr. Goebbels. It at least has the merit of extreme simplicity.<sup>146</sup>

The philosophy of Vincent Penhale is one which favours constant change. "'I have been overweening in my belief that all can be achieved, by action. No one has believed more in action than I have. Arrogant have-not action-and-damn-the-consequences."<sup>147</sup> The specious morality of the have-not's grasping for power is unmasked in the novel. This will for mastery is the real motive for the activist. Thus, Vincent complains



to Mr. Perl about the "religion of class, which in England restricts the personal development of any man or woman born outside the genteel pale. It denies expansion to him or her. . . ."<sup>148</sup> But Vincent's own solution to the problem of Lebensraum is the usurpation of wealth and property. Lewis's comment on the territorial ambitions of the Hitler policy is apposite here, for it focusses on the simple usurping of power that is the goal of the pseudo-revolutionist. "On the principle of fire driving out fire, a lot of Nazi doctrine is merely a turning of the tables upon the Enemy."<sup>149</sup> The desire for power and the moral sanctions to justify it are commutative. "'You are egotist,' smiled Mr. Perl, 'Let us forget class. That is not the whole picture. Whatever station in life you had appeared in, it would have been the same."<sup>150</sup> Lewis discussed Lebensraum in similar terms to those of Mr. Perl:

If there is a right involved at all in Hitler's claim to 'expand,' it can only reside in the right that is might; and in its turn the might is the might of numbers only. . . .

So one thing at least is clear, as a result of this analysis: namely that the doctrine of force is imposed upon the German (if he is an expansionist): for there is no other principle within his reach. And the mysticism of race is imposed upon him, too, in order to tone down the might-is-right doctrine; since the Germans have after all inherited like the rest of us a certain civilized squeamishness, which makes them prefer a fig-leaf, if no more, upon the Old Adam. The Race Theory is a fig-leaf, therefore — designed to render Salonfähig Machine-Age cave-man, on the prowl for raw material.<sup>151</sup>

For the power-hungry, class-war is a romanticized ideal. There will always be fighting; in "the military dictum of the Prussian. . . what we call 'peace' is merely intervals interrupting a state of war."<sup>152</sup> War is the natural state of things in Vincent's world of 'nature red in tooth and claw,' and Vincent remarks that "'this is not a time at all. It is merely a gap."<sup>153</sup>

Lewis's fictional hero shares several individual idiosyncracies with Hitler. These specific features can be observed in the descriptions





of Hitler from Lewis's own books of this period and also in those by other contemporary writers.<sup>154</sup> Both men of action manifest an 'agressive use of the personality.' Both use the voice as an instrument of the will. Vincent's working-class family are impressed by his 'B.B.C. voice.' "He had a beautiful voice, Vincent had, she reflected. He could have been a proper slap-up clergyman with that voice of his, or a radio announcer."<sup>155</sup> Hitler too is a spell-binding orator. Lewis draws attention to the way the orator assembled a repertory of gestures and appearances to accompany his famous voice. "This engine for producing mass emotion is very interesting indeed. And in nothing is it so interesting as in what it offers to the eye. For this is, after all, a talking-box to be seen as well as heard. The cut of a soap-boxer's coat, or the colour of his hair, is as important as the timbre of his voice."<sup>156</sup>

In illustrating these observations, I direct the reader to plates accompanying the text. The Low cartoon, "The Hand of Friendship," is a simple illustration of the dehumanized voice which the tyrant amplifies mechanically. One notes the military cap on the loudspeaker; the 'talking-box' orator, or indeed the authoritarian radio voice, becomes a political tool. I have also reproduced some of the photographs of Hitler, published in August, 1966 in Der Spiegel as part of a series on the Hitler-Zeit entitled "Fahrplan eines Welteroberers." The photographs were only recently discovered in Hitler's private documents. Hitler photographed himself practising the gestures and poses that were to accompany his speeches. These are samples of the appeals the 'talking-box' made to the eye of the camera.

Vincent's spell-binding is limited to his immediate circle. He has magically transformed himself into an acceptable representative of

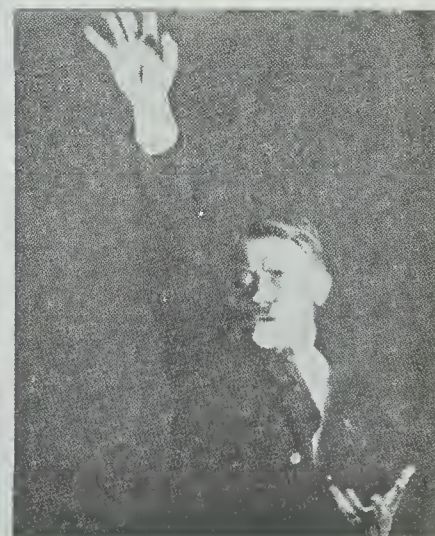
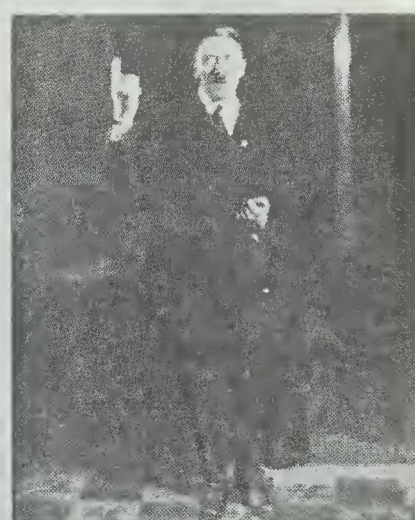
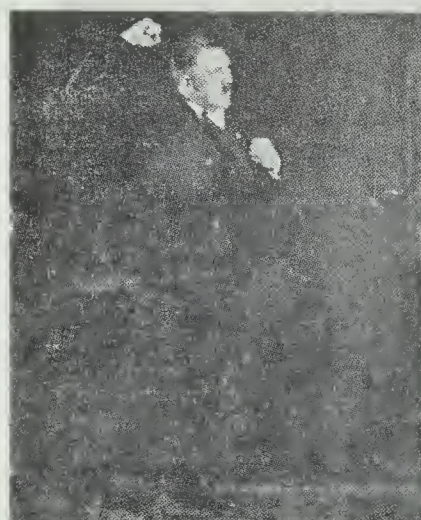






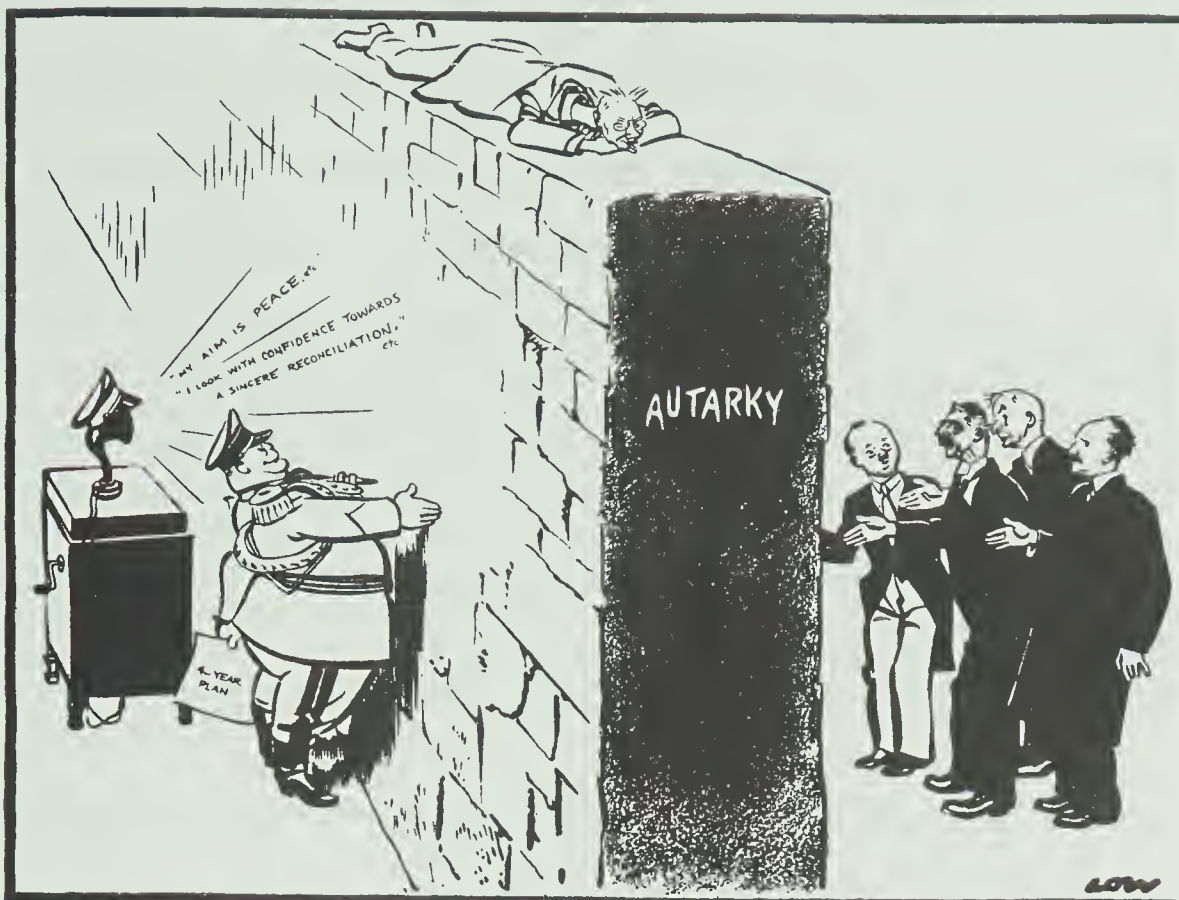
### Mit einem Grammophon unter dem Arm

erschien Hitler eines Tages im Jahre 1925 in der Münchner Wohnung seines Photographen Heinrich Hoffmann, um mit Hilfe der Kamera Wirksamkeit und Verbesserungsfähigkeit von Redner-Posen zu prüfen. Hitler legte eine seiner Redner-Platten auf und mimte bei bestimmten Sätzen die ihm am wirkungsvollsten erscheinende Pose, derweil Hoffmann den Auslöser betätigte. Während des Dritten Reiches durften die Bilder nicht veröffentlicht werden.









HAND OF FRIENDSHIP



OFF FOR THE HOLIDAYS



the wealthy dilettant-artist type, and he exercises his mesmerizing power on his sister, his wife, and his friend Martin. Hitler's magic too has been greatly intensified by the technology of the microphone, amplifier and speaker in the world of the novel:

A number of people were gathered in the guest-room or library before the radio. A rather harsh, quiet voice, picking its words, was coming out of it: a voice speaking in the German language, in a tone of melancholy half-expostulation, half-defiance. And this was the voice that was pronouncing the verdict. Of war for everybody, or peace for everybody.

. . . But since Fate unfortunately spoke a language which they were unable to understand, they inclined their ears towards the instrument in the hope that they might at least discover if Fate was in a bad temper to-night, or whether the wind was to be tempered to the shorn lamb—in which case a raucous coo or two might be expected out of the diabolical sound-box.<sup>157</sup>

Again, Vincent's appearances on stage are limited to a few parts in the plays of Shaw and Chekov, while Hitler projects his personality from vast stages in mass rallies. Alan Bullock described Hitler as a consummate actor, "with the actor's and orator's facility for absorbing himself in a role and convincing himself of the truth of what he was saying at the time he was saying it. . . . with practice the part became second nature to him, and with the immense prestige of success behind him, and the resources of a powerful state at his command, there were few who could resist the impression of the piercing eyes, the Napoleonic pose, and the 'historic' personality."<sup>158</sup>

A quality in Hitler that Lewis found fascinating was the dictator's ability to manipulate his facial expressions, tone of voice, and carriage to create various emotional impressions as if by magic. Lewis demonstrates the rudiments of this technique in Vincent so that we see the power which the man behind the masks has over others. Alan Bullock observed that Hitler's power to bewitch his audience "has been likened to the occult arts of the African medicine-man or the Asiatic Shaman; others





have compared it to the sensitivity of a medium, and the magnetism of a hypnotist."<sup>159</sup>

Lewis analyzed the properties of the shaman in The Art of Being Ruled, published in 1926. The shaman's magic over others is especially dangerous in the political sphere because it works by disarming the audience. The shaman specializes in transmutation. Bashfulness and shyness overtake him when he feels the call to transform himself radically for his office. He becomes womanized, a soft man whose dissimulations go unnoticed.<sup>160</sup> From contemporary accounts of Hitler, Lewis assembled an image of him as a "monster of shyness" and a "paranoic violet."<sup>161</sup> Like Vincent, Hitler seems consciously to be conforming to the stereo-type of the 'artist-type.' "The genus 'artist' is volatile, nervous, prone to emotional excesses. With that other type-form, the 'feminine,' the artist has much in common."<sup>162</sup> Both the self-dramatizing 'artist-type' and the hysterical woman exploit their 'sensitivity' to take advantage of others. Vincent describes his own artist's temperament, romantic, erratic, and amoral, as a "damned convenient thing."<sup>163</sup> The shaman is dangerous precisely in the ratio of the amount of harm he can do.

In his discussion of Hitler's use of his personality, Lewis cited a first-hand description from a book by Martha Dodd. He wrote, introducing her remarks, "Of all the accounts I have read of Hitler, I consider that a woman's is the most useful:"

This first glance left me with a picture of a weak, soft face, with pouches under the eyes, full lips, and very little bony facial structure. The moustache didn't seem as ridiculous as it appeared in pictures. . . .

This particular afternoon he was excessively gentle and modest in his manner. Unobtrusive, communicative, informal, he had a certain quiet charm, almost a tenderness of speech and glance. . . . The curious embarrassment he showed in meeting me, his somewhat apologetic, nervous manner, my father tells me — and other diplomats as well — are always present when he meets the diplomatic corps en masse. This self-consciousness has created in him a shyness and distaste for meeting people above



him in station or wealth. As time went on, Hitler's face and bearing changed noticeably — he began to look and walk more and more like Mussolini. But the peculiar shy strain of character has to this day remained.<sup>164</sup>

Lewis explained that the satirist served his society by commenting critically on the vulgarizing of standards of judgement. This is his best way "of keeping a limited area clear for the operations of the 'impartial truth' of art and of science."<sup>165</sup> Again, in opening the book in which he first discussed the dissimulations of the shaman, Lewis explained that his work as a critic was intended as a concrete, consistent, and reliable aid to modern man in his travels through 'transition.' "In such a fluid world we should by all rights be building boats rather than houses. But this essay is a sort of ark, or dwelling for the mind, designed to float and navigate; and we should all be wise, with or without covenants, to provide ourselves with such a shell."<sup>166</sup> In The Hitler Cult and The Vulgar Streak Lewis was instructing his readers in the ways of the diffident, gentle-seeming proletarian shaman, much as Machiavelli had done in his anatomies of the Borgian dandies of the Renaissance.<sup>167</sup> Lewis's studies, in fiction and in criticism, of these emerging types, compose a pragmatic politics of survival in which awareness is the real 'art of being ruled.' In the novel The Vulgar Streak, Vincent observes that his world is "full of Hitlers."<sup>168</sup> Lewis has set himself the task of exposing some of their techniques of exploitation.

The rebellion that engaged the energies of a Hitler was essentially a stupid one, "a trite passion,"<sup>169</sup> based on a romantic martial dream, Lewis wrote. Lewis compared Hitler to Don Quixote:

To-day there is a genuine eccentric at large — and he rules an enormous nation — who mixes up with the personae of the Sagaman. . . . the history of post-war Europe is being written by a Don Quixote in real life — a twentieth century German Don Quixote in a little brown double-breasted coat and a toothbrush moustache. We English are one of this deluded:



man's biggest and most dangerous windmills --alas! for this knight is differently armed from him of La Mancha.<sup>170</sup>

The significance of this fantasy-rebellion can only be measured in the proportion of harm it can do, and technology has amplified the gestures of the Twentieth Century Hitlers.

'Diabolical machines of empty will,' the political tyrants pursue the chimeras of class-struggle and international hegemony. Because their goals are fantastic, their dynamism is transitory and their will is aimless. Lewis entitled one chapter of The Hitler Cult "The Sleepwalker," referring to a famous statement Hitler made in a speech on March fifteenth, 1938, just after his successful re-occupation of the Rhineland. "I go the way that Providence dictates with the assurance of a sleepwalker."<sup>171</sup> Against the best advice of his Army consultants, Hitler had trusted to intuition as a basis for action. In Lewis's phrase, the actor-shaman Hitler has "all the materials for an ecstatic."<sup>172</sup>

With his analysis of the motivation and strategies of Vincent Penhale, Lewis achieved a suggestive portrait of Hitler. Lewis's examination of the style of the tyrants's climb to power, logically taken to its conclusion, was prophetic of the outcome of that pattern of motive and action:

. . . before accepting the Hitler myth at anything like its face value, we should remember that it was Hitler who invented the myth, assiduously cultivating and manipulating it for his own ends. So long as he did this, he was brilliantly successful; it was when he began to believe his own magic, and accept the myth of himself as true, that his flair faltered.<sup>173</sup>

In the diffraction between truth and falsehood, the political leader gains energy. He can exploit the world of sham rooted in superstition and half-truth, but he will be destroyed by the image of himself he has created if he begins to allow his role to take over his whole life. The most successful dissimulator also possesses the most truth.





April Mallow is a heavy-limbed virgin of thirty who epitomizes the passivity characteristic of a whole line of Lewis women, from Bertha Lunken to Hester Harding. In all her "thirty years of wide-eyed babyhood,"<sup>174</sup> April's thoughts have never risen out of conventional patterns. War for her is a *matinée* film of young English women in smart nurse's caps tending tidily to the soldiers:

To none was she more attractive than to a certain pallid and war-worn man, with a head bloody but unbowed, who was propped upon a nest of pillows in a hospital bed. Not an ordinary hospital, but a beautiful one run by the Duchess of Gloucester or the Duchess of Kent (in that order) in a delightful part of England; yes! not far from her home in Wiltshire, indeed conveniently close. Shocking things were happening in London, bombs were raining down — the balloon barrage, as that Professor-man had foreseen, was entirely useless. But here all was peaceful and orderly. . . .<sup>175</sup>

Her mind given over to romantic fables of this kind, April has only a tenuous grasp of reality. For example, in response to Vincent's remark that the poor are incapable of punning, April finds she must agree.

"She thought of the poor, and certainly she could not see them collectively engaged in punning—not in the same way as she could see them engaged in hop-picking."<sup>176</sup> April's tractable nature is neatly complemented by her psychological state during pregnancy. "Their marriage seemed to be rounding itself out and taking on a mellow fullness already, and in her eyes was the primitive contentment of motherhood."<sup>177</sup>

Vincent's conquest of this docile creature is easily accomplished. I quote Lewis's account of the seduction fully, because certain details in it are clear pointers to the political allegory underlying the narrative:

That morning at six a.m.—it was September 28—the door of April Mallow's bedroom opened and Mr. Vincent Penhale stepped out into the passage. His dressing-gown, of an aggressive red, was held like a toga. He closed the door, nodded to a man who was removing shoes from before the door of Mrs. Mallow's room, and made his way to the head of the stairs which led to the entresol, where his room and Martin's were situated.<sup>178</sup>



Vincent's aggressive red toga is a token of the martial uniform of Imperial Rome. It connotes the garment earned by the warrior-citizen. The date Lewis here specifies marks historically the capitulation of the Chamberlain and Daladier governments to Hitler's terms for the division of Czechoslovakia.<sup>179</sup> The diplomats of the liberal democracies had been completely outmanoeuvred by Hitler's alternating blandishments and threats of aggression.

April Mallow functions in the political allegory as an emblem of the pliant, outmoded English liberal tradition in the process of yielding to aggressive pressures. "' . . . she will melt one of these days. Then there'll be a bit of a mess.. I frankly dread that moment."<sup>180</sup> Lewis is manipulating his fictional character against historical fact to probe the meaning of the Czech crisis. Mrs. Mallow is entertained by Vincent's strategy against her daughter, and her thoughts on the subject are another indicator of Lewis's technique:

A certain criminal gleam in the clever hazel eye of the young man about whom they had been indirectly talking, appealed to her. So they would stop in Venice and give the Wilhelmstrasse another chance to climb down—and Mr. Penhale further opportunities to deploy his siege trains about the person of the lovely April.<sup>181</sup>

In the ruthless struggle for power and diplomatic advantage, the Chamberlain government proved outmoded and irrelevant. April ('O, to be in England') is too naive a creature to pursue an independent course of her own design. She is carried along by energies and strategies outside her control.

The name 'Mallow' is a further sign of the role April plays in the political allegory. Lewis termed the English liberal tradition, vulgarized by Chamberlain's time into torpidity, 'the big soft centre.'<sup>182</sup> The British love of sweets is contained in this phrase, but of course



Lewis is primarily suggesting the tractable, tame nature of England's political leaders of the liberal variety. "In the Anglosaxon democracies the political 'Centre' is very large and very soft."<sup>183</sup> During the period between the two World Wars, Lewis repeatedly criticized the British parliamentary system for its ineffectual response to the economic crises resulting from the Great War. The government was too slow-moving to cope with an age of accelerated change. "British democracy," he wrote in Left Wings over Europe, "is the ideal milch-cow."<sup>184</sup> Vincent echoes this awareness that the age of genuine leadership from liberal thinkers was over, at least temporarily: "'You are a nice girl, aren't you, April? Perhaps a nice girl cannot be good politics. When you are no longer nice, then you may become quite respectable politically.'"<sup>185</sup> The nice-girl politics of the Chamberlain government during the crisis over Czechoslovakia could not resist Hitler's subornings:

And now all this—like fate unmasking itself, with hideous results.

Her gentle mind, of which the gentle contours of her face were the outward expression, was not shaped to receive a content such as this. Even to find a place in her consciousness at all, such events must civilize themselves, be toned down. Such a drama as had begun to be played all around her—with herself forcibly recruited as one of the cast—could only be seriously entertained by her inside an asylum. Outside, it just could not be true: such things simply did not happen. It was a dream from which she would wake up. . . .<sup>186</sup>

We have been examining both a political process and a personal style in this analysis of the political satire of the novel The Vulgar Streak. Hitler is the most notorious exponent of that process and style. Lewis, I would suggest, employed two other models as well in the composition of Vincent Penhale.

The witness agreed that one local branch of the Fascist Movement in Britain at one time formed a flying club and held air rallies.

'What earthly assistance to a political movement is an air rally?' asked Birkett.

'Anything which promotes manly sports helps a movement like ours,' Sir Oswald answered. 'The Junior Imperial League has whist drives. We have air rallies, football matches and boxing contests.'<sup>187</sup>





Oswald Mosley was a brilliant young politician who was impatient with the slow pace of democratic politics, and angered with the misuse of the productive capabilities of the British nation and Empire. The election slogan of the Conservatives under Baldwin had been 'Safety First,' and against this Mosley offered a program of active social revolution:

Our British Union of Fascists will without doubt be misrepresented by politicians of the older schools. The Movement did not begin with the wiseacres and the theorists. It was born from a surging discontent with a regime where nothing can be achieved. The Old Gang hold the stage; and, to them, misrepresentation is the path of their own salvation.<sup>188</sup>

Married to Lord Curzon's daughter, Mosley began his political career with the Conservative Party. He crossed the House to serve briefly in the Labour government under Macdonald, and fought the 1931 General Election as the leader of an independent party. During the election the New Party was wiped out, and Mosley made one more radical switch, to the British Fascist Party. He took over the leadership of this party and gained the powerful support of the newspaper The Daily Mail. Mosley wrote in his autobiography that when the New Party was defeated at the polls he published its epitaph in order to emphasize his enduring determination and to herald a renaissance of the spirit under a new political organization, the Fascists:

Better the great adventure, better the great attempt for England's sake, better defeat, disaster, better for the end of that trivial thing called political order, than stifling in a uniform of blue and gold, strutting and posturing on the stage of little England, amid the scenery of decadence, until history, in turning over an heroic page of the human story, writes of us the contemptuous proscrip: 'These were the men to whom was entrusted the Empire of Great Britain, and whose idleness, ignorance and cowardice left it a Spain.' We shall win; or at least we shall return upon our shields.<sup>189</sup>

The language of this 'epitaph' is an index of the romantic and martial quality of Mosley's idealism.





Mosley was a noted orator. He favoured the mass rallies of the Nuremburg pattern, with loudspeakers broadcasting his speeches to throngs of supporters. On stage, he cut a striking figure with his black clothing and energetic delivery. Harold Nicolson gave an account of Mosley's style. "He is certainly an impassioned revivalist speaker, striding up and down the rather frail platform with great panther steps and gesticulating with a pointing, and occasionally a stabbing, index, with the result that there was real enthusiasm toward the end and one had the feeling that ninety percent of the audience were certainly convinced at that moment."<sup>190</sup>

Nicolson served as editor of the periodical magazine published by the British Union of Fascists. The magazine, titled Action, ran until December 31, 1931. Close examination of the style of Mosley's organization shows the machine-like dynamism at its core. Harold Nicolson's diary for the inter-war years is a valuable indicator of the tenor of B.U.F. political policy. Here, for example, Nicolson is speculating that an election will be forced, to catch the Fascists unprepared:

The increase in communism will be rapid and immense. But can we counter this by fascism? And will not the Conservative element be represented not by dynamic force but by sheer static obstruction? The worst of it is that the communists will collar our imaginative appeal to youth, novelty and excitement. We decide to call the Youth Movement the Volts (vigour-order-loyalty-triumph).<sup>191</sup>

Again, in Mosley's resignation speech delivered in the House of Commons, the imagery of the machine is pre-eminent. "The worst thing that can happen to a government is to assume responsibilities without control . . . . When you are setting out on an enterprise which means nothing less than the reorganization of the industrial life of the city, you must have a system. You must, in a word, have a machine, and that machine has not even been created."<sup>192</sup>



Another entry from Nicolson's diary implied the difficulties he, as a kindly English liberal gentleman, had in accommodating his ideas to the dynamic, primitive symbolism of the militant new movement. "We have a meeting of the Party. Tom [Mosley] says that this [violence in a Glasgow public meeting] forces us to be fascist and that we need no longer hesitate to create our trained and disciplined force. We discuss their uniforms. I suggest grey flannel trousers and shirts."<sup>193</sup> The fascists adopted the jet-black shirt as their uniform.

In 1932, Harold Nicolson travelled to Berlin and then met Mosley in Rome. Their travels to fascist countries were widely and disapprovingly publicized in the British press. In the last issue of their magazine Action, Mosley and Nicolson published an 'Explanation' of their activities:

We intend to study. . . new political forces born of crisis, conducted by youth and inspired by completely new ideas of economic and political organization. This does not mean that we wish to import Italian or German methods and practices into this country. . . . We go to collect information, so that if and when this country comes to pass through great events, a few of us may be prepared.<sup>194</sup>

Mosley's was a movement of action and change. He sought to use the shapeless dissatisfaction of the masses of working-class Englishmen as the source of energy for his political machine — the Corporate State:

Re the Youth Movement, yes, I think Williams is a very remarkable man with an extraordinary flair for working-class movement and organization. He realizes what the bourgeois never can realize—that the working-class have no sense of being ridiculous in the way that we have, and that their very drab lives give them a great thirst for color and for drama: hence the excesses of the cinema.<sup>195</sup>

At the outbreak of the Second World War Mosley was interned by the British government for sedition.

In his studies of the uses of power Lewis examined the pre-suppositions of a wide-ranging group of political theorists. Among these,



the figure of Georges Sorel stands out in Lewis's criticism. In Sorel's arguments for a mobilization of masses of workers in the service of a 'catastrophic myth,' Lewis saw both the violence and the anti-rationalism of a political philosophy of action. "The veneration for action, and for men of action, is a feature of Twentieth Century thinking. . . . in France and the continent in general some of the men most influential in this century--Nietzsche (for he belongs to the Twentieth), Sorel, Péguy, Maurras, Malraux, have exalted the life of action--and, what is also to be noted, have been followed because they did so. And it has not always been the most masculine or active who have responded to this vitalist gospel."<sup>196</sup> Sorel operates like an artist in the manipulating of human lives. He is an artist in hate, in Lewis's description:

Of all the apostles of dangerous living, pure action, 'heroism', blood and iron, Georges Sorel was the worst--the most shrewd and irresponsible. If not at his instigation it was under his inflammatory influence that Berth, in 1913-14, attacked everything and everyone capable of bringing a little moderation into the over-heated atmosphere. The same repressive propaganda, on the German side of the Rhine, proceeded from the harsher pens of pangermanist professors.

Sorel's masterpiece of incitement to violence was not, however, directed to inflaming chauvinism but to providing for the maximum of class-hatred. . . .it was a matter of complete indifference to him which class got charged with hatred first: bourgeoisie or proletariat, it was all one. The bourgeoisie were all right, provided they loathed the proletariat so much that it increased the natural dislike of the poor class for the rich class. There was a beautiful detachment about Sorel.<sup>197</sup>

This 'beautiful detachment' is an inhuman aesthetic of violence. Sorel argued that men can be mobilized only around some simple fantasy of action. His whole program for social revolution was integrally expressed as a single, catastrophic myth, the myth of the general strike. The 'content' of this myth is elemental, and therefore absolute. The entire body of workers ceases work and society is divided into two camps: the strikers on one side, and all the rest of society on the other. All





production ceases and the entire structure of the existing society and its institutions collapses. The strikers dictate their own terms and determine their own laws. They march back to work and resume production, invigorating the society they now control. They are no longer proletarians, but are free and unrestricted producers.

Sorel himself described the myth as an immeasurable source of energy, "not descriptive of things, but expressions of a determination to act."<sup>198</sup> Because this myth is an expression of will, it does not have meaning in the sense that an event would. "A myth cannot be refuted, since it is at bottom, identical with the convictions of a group, being the expression of these convictions in the language of movement, and it is in consequence unanalyzable into parts which could be placed on the plane of historical descriptions."<sup>199</sup> That is, once the collective energies of the mass of men have been mobilized in the service of the myth, it cannot be destroyed.

Lewis saw the Sorelian myth as a natural, logical development from the Darwinian theory of natural selection. "Like his master, Nietzsche, he is, in the last analysis, romantically Darwinian. — Human society is red in tooth and claw. They are part of the murderous zoo of nature."<sup>200</sup> In his essay on the ethics of violence, Sorel wrote that it was imperative to break down the inhibiting social regulations which 'unnaturally' oppose violence. Since the Age of Reason, European nations had been coalescing into strong centrally governed societies, he argued. Now the new politics of catastrophe demanded that social resistance to violent disruption be broken down:

There are so many legal precautions against violence, and our upbringing is directed towards so weakening our tendencies towards violence, that we are instinctively inclined to think that any act of violence is a manifestation of a return to barbarism. Peace has always been considered



the greatest of blessings and the essential condition of all material progress, and it is for this reason that industrial societies have so often been contrasted favourably with the military ones.<sup>201</sup>

Lewis pointed out the connection between Sorel's cult of violent action and the romantic celebration of the hero. "A sultry and catastrophic landscape was to Sorel's liking, for it was such conditions that were propitious for his genius. Looking backward, the Eighteenth Century greatly disgusted him: the Age of Reason, with its attempt to eliminate everything from life which produces misery and violence, and so tragedy (which in its turn produces heroism, of which there must be a professor named Sorel.)"<sup>202</sup> Lewis discussed Sorel's exploitation of the appetite for action among the dissatisfied poor. He wrote in The Art of Being Ruled that Sorel sought to provide the simple folk with the heroic material and gallery of martyrs they could no longer derive from religion.<sup>203</sup> Sorel's ethic of violence demanded absolute quiescent loyalty from the workers. Their sole function was to pose a continuing massive threat of sacrifice — their own:

Sorel's ethic is the ethic of the political sect living in the midst of a continuous crisis, with all the stress on purity and all the fear of contamination by the affairs of this world which mark the sect. It is the ethic of crisis, and it is of a piece with the expectation of an ever deepening crisis which is resolved ultimately only by an apocalyptic transformation in which everything is totally changed.<sup>204</sup>

The "world full of Hitler's" which is the setting for The Vulgar Streak, is inhabited by a political agency which offers its followers only social disruption. The Sorel's, Mosley's and Hitler's give promises of future power in return for present sacrifice. Lewis throws open the question of the motivation behind this desire to take the extreme path of violent sacrifice. The catastrophic solution to revolutionary problems is only one possible solution — that of an extreme destruction. It is also a



vulgarization of the meaning of revolution, Lewis wrote. "To say that people cannot change their souls (or a good part of them) without destroying their bodies is a very material doctrine indeed."<sup>205</sup> Lewis sympathized with the desire of the revolutionary to change the repressive economic and social features of society, but he recognized that massive social convulsions were no automatic guarantee of future improvements. He posed the question in his criticism and, obliquely, in his fiction:

Is this new Class-war purged of self interest? Are we no longer going to be cannonfodder. . . but be asked to die in battle for ourselves? "Since Mankind is the hero of every true man's romance, so that Mankind might live happily ever afterwards we all of us would be ready to risk our skins and fortunes." But there are many disquieting features about these warlike, crusading proposals, of our rulers.<sup>206</sup>

The politics of catastrophe repudiates the famous dictum of Clausewitz. For the actionists, war is the first resort. Lewis speculated in Left Wings over Europe (1936) and in The Mysterious Mr. Bull (1938) that the strategy of the next war would be to redirect the nationalist energies of the European nations. The class-war would replace the jingo-war. After the First World War, chauvinism was a discredited attitude. But with the unemployment and inflation of the 1920's the legitimate resentment of the disadvantaged became a new source of energy for the proponents of action to exploit. Aroused class-hatred gave new life to the advocates of power. Lewis demonstrated in his books of this period that political leaders who proposed war as the solution to social and economic injustices were interested in the securing of power for its own ends:

It will be obvious to you now how 'class' is the one thing calculated to drive out what was called 'patriotism.' And there is no one so stupid as not to appreciate all that is barren and meaningless in the jingo emotions, by means of which nation was formerly stirred up against nation. How much more convincingly, (once it is allowed by those in power) durably effective, is the appeal to the poor to dispossess the rich! There you have a war in which everybody has a discernible personal interest. And





what was lacking so much in the last war was just that 'personal touch.' Like Big Business, it was an 'inhuman' thing.<sup>207</sup>

Like Vincent Penhale, the actionists were inspired by a driving will to change something, compounded by a belief that any change would be an improvement. Vincent summed up his will to change in a phrase, "arrogant have-not action-and-damn-the-consequences."

Lewis agreed fundamentally with the dissatisfaction Vincent expressed about the limitations the class-system had put on his development as a person. "I, too, am for the poor against the rich. But in my view they misjudge the situation. The future liberties of the plain workman were better assured in the years before this epoch of wars and 'catastrophic' politics."<sup>208</sup> Lewis saw that the real struggle between the classes cut across national boundaries:

There is only one struggle between the poor and the rich, and that is the conflict within the individual states, which aims at the destruction (by slow means or quick means, according to whether you subscribe to the Socialist or 'Radical', or to the Communist solution) of that system of exploitation by which all that is creative and intelligent is smothered or prevented from realizing itself by the parasitic and unintelligent.<sup>209</sup>

This artificial division of nations into two warring camps, the rich and the poor, cannot be justified morally, ". . .in fact it is not the real issue at all. It is merely an emotional counterfeit."<sup>210</sup>

Political power seekers exploit the deep seated 'principles' and superstitions of a people who have been discouraged from thinking in new patterns. The citizen of a society who does not recognize the new changes of life patterns available to him is marked for exploitation by men who, potentially, can control his education and all the media that are his sources of new information, Lewis suggested. The mass of men in a society of the modern age are privy to a cliché of progress. They know things have changed, that they are living in an age of transition.





But they do not know the precise nature or direction of this change.

"They are creatures of habit. . . . It is by taking advantage of this human peculiarity that the politician invariably operates, and brings off his most tragic coups," Lewis wrote.<sup>211</sup> The men in a society who have been deprived of a sense of their present situation "are firmly on the side of those people who would thrust us back into the medieval chaos and barbarity; at whose hypnotic 'historical' suggestion we would fight all the old european wars over again, like a gigantic cast of Movie supers, and so fill the pockets of these political impresarios."<sup>212</sup>

By setting his novel in Italy in 1938, Lewis could anticipate imaginatively the effect that the politics of violent action would have on the sensibilities of every European. There is a current of violence and disease underlying the surface gaiety of Venice in The Vulgar Streak. And the holidayers, the 'Breakfasting British' cannot long ignore the real fact of violent war:

After breakfast Vincent accompanied Martin to the offices of the Wagon-lits. It was Martin's purpose to get English news. The news was black. But as the day wore on the atmosphere became at every moment more opaque with war. Like the red exhalation that settles upon a spot where some woman's body has been found dismembered, or some child's body raped and choked — and, like football crowds, butchers by proxy in their thousands have met to inhale the oppressive air—the famous 'war-psychosis' settled upon everybody and everything.<sup>213</sup>

Through his character Vincent Penhale, Lewis was developing in The Vulgar Streak a theory of the politics of endurance. It was the reverse of a philosophy of action, and it offered the detachment of the observer in exchange for the titillation of the actor. It had developed fully in Lewis's thinking by the end of the War, when he wrote Rude Assignment.<sup>214</sup> Vincent does recognize that if life under the conditions of class-hatred is a 'big, pompous, exclusive Mayfair party,' the wisest course for a sensitive and thoughtful man is to acknowledge how dull the



party is, and then 'forget all about it.' As Martin puts it, one should leave the party people in undisturbed possession of all the splendid houses, good food, and "sham-sham-sham-champagne."<sup>215</sup> I conclude this discussion of the political satire in The Vulgar Streak with Vincent's final affirmation: "'I have proved. . . upon my little personal stage, that force is barren. Conceived in these hard terms of action-for-action's sake nothing can be achieved except for too short a period to matter. I have proved that. . . .'"<sup>216</sup>

#### Part IV: Economics

"Because to-day we have a true understanding of economics, we know that Plain-men cannot afford ideals." - The Bailiff<sup>217</sup>

Vincent achieved his speech, manners, and grooming of a gentleman by a sedulous aping of upper-class models. His masquerade was complete only with the money he received from Halvorsen, in return for passing forged bank-notes. "'I inherited no money. That was a lie. I have no property in Canada or anywhere else. I was only able to take this place, transport myself to Venice, and all the rest, on the passing of counterfeit money."<sup>218</sup> He took to its literal extreme the phrase 'the only way to get ahead in the world is to make money.' Halvorsen, indeed, parodies Polonius's advice to the Prince when he tells Vincent defiantly, "'I'm not a good borrower. I preferred minting a bit myself."<sup>219</sup> Vincent's whole impersonation of a style of life is a form of counterfeit:

'I do not apologize. Or, I only apologize to you, April. . . . I have passed a lot of counterfeit stuff on you.

Falsum in uno, falsum in omnibus. That is about all the Latin I know. That's fearfully true; one falsity leads to another, it is all of a piece. I am just as sham as the sham notes I lived on. The more I lived upon them, the more sham I became.'<sup>220</sup>

The creation of money out of paper is properly the privilege of



the ruling classes, and so Vincent's success in beating them at their own game is a source of great pride to him. As Halvorsen explained, the forger is simply an unlicensed entrepreneur in the field of high finance.

"In his view, the modern state is based upon organized — legalized — Fraud. Consequently, to counterfeit its fraudulent and oppressively administered currency appears to him, an act of poetic justice."<sup>221</sup>

Hugh Kenner wrote that the denouement of The Vulgar Streak comes with the revelation that Vincent has supported his elegance by passing forged cheques. He continues, "Governments, it is true, do this all the time; currency, like 'class,' is what people can be persuaded to accept."<sup>222</sup>

Martin Penny-Smythe is the representative of the privileged social class in the novel. His name is a token of the economic truths Vincent recognizes. For Martin is a maker (smith) of money; to his class belongs the right of manufacturing the means of exchange for the nation. Vincent describes his own successful usurpation of this upper-class privilege as the story of "a labourer's son. . . who rose from nothing to the ranks of Penny-Smithery."<sup>223</sup>

The medium of exchange in these social and economic transactions is a piece of paper. Art has been subverted in the production of the counterfeit notes:

This was apparently an engraver's workshop. It contained a large and small press: a chest of shallow drawers for the storage of paper; two workbenches and several stools, with powerful cable-joined lights, and a rack full of tools. There were shelves holding a multiplicity of bottles. The buff linoleum was stained all the colours of the rainbow — but a rainbow that had been trampled on a good deal.<sup>224</sup>

When we learn that Dougal has been murdered in this shop of Halvorsen's, Lewis gives the reader another view of this rainbow scene. "Halvorsen glanced at the floor. There was a different stain upon it to that produced by the ingravure inks."<sup>225</sup>





The novel is built up out of a series of false fronts and transformations, for even the physical settings of the work are described as façades masking sordid realities. Lewis is examining a monetary theory with this use of the imagery of masks, forgeries, and counterfeit pieces of paper. Not only Vincent, but the whole of the British economy, is examined as if it were living on an overdraft. "For what, after all, is this so much canvassed problem of the 'haves' and 'have-nots' — or for that matter the problem of 'equality' — but the problem of the poor and the rich: of those nations who lend money out at exorbitant interest to other nations, and those who have no money to lend?"<sup>226</sup> There were more than enough problems among the 'have-not's' at home to occupy the minds and energies of the politicians, Lewis felt:

. . . there are other things just as 'callous' as Mussolini's Abyssinian Expedition to be seen in this world of ours. 'Poverty in the midst of plenty'—those millions of unemployed people, wilting, shrinking and dying by inches, of under-nourishment, boredom and hatred of an existence which holds for them so little meaning: there is some terrible 'callousness' somewhere about, that all that should be tolerated; that men 'in power' should sit down day after day and spin phrases about the delinquencies of this or that foreign statesman, and never once remember what responsibilities 'power' brings with it. A pound-note is a piece of paper, it is only a food and rent ticket, after all: and some people have millions of these tickets, some have none.<sup>227</sup>

Lewis speculated in several of his books written over a period of years that the system of credit advocated by Major Douglas<sup>228</sup> and by economists advising Hitler in the early years of the Third Reich would be a much more reliable means of representing the actual values of goods and services:

It is no exaggeration to say. . .that Finance to me is a closed book. I have never had either the aptitude or application required to master even the elements of that strange science. So when I have heard travellers' tales of adventures in this unreal world of super-specialized Credit-Technique—which has grown up (unnoticed by the man-in-the-street) like some vast and menacing fungus above the world of primitive, three-dimensional, labour and barter, I have never been able to check them. I tell you what I know, for what it is worth.<sup>229</sup>



As Lewis described it, the paper currencies of the Western democracies were rapidly losing any real meaning as symbols of actual wealth. The bank-note, produced by national mints, had become a counter in the extortionate system of inflated credit. The façade, the forgery, and the subversion of creative arts explored in the novel The Vulgar Streak are tokens of the 'fungus above the world of primitive, three-dimensional, labour and barter.' Ezra Pound evoked the fuzzy, unreliable quality of the economic life under this usurious system in his Canto XLV, "with usura the line grows thick/ with usura is no clean demarcation."

Economics, the 'dismal science' of Ruskin's day, had become a secret, suspect art. "We have got used to the money-magicians," Lewis wrote in 1926, "We are all under their spell."<sup>230</sup> For Lewis, the disquieting feature of this money-spinning was that the productive capabilities of the nation were not rationally assessed:

There are exceedingly hard and heavy times — hard in every sense. They are times of great and wonderful profusion and plenty and of technical powers of limitless production beyond men's dreams. But upon all that plenty, and that power to use it, is come a dark embargo. It is all locked away from us. By artificial systems of great cunning this land flowing with milk and honey has been transformed into a waterless desert.<sup>231</sup>

One falsehood leads to another, irrevocably; and when society has been trained to accept false standards of value, it can no longer measure the true value of anything. "'I was obliged to lie, in order to gain your confidence,'" Vincent explains to Martin.<sup>232</sup>

In The Vulgar Streak Lewis provides considerable documentation for his satiric examination of the false foundations of the accepted economics. For example, Mr. Herb provides Vincent with a salutary lesson on the mysteries of the hire-purchase (i.e. credit) system of buying. "'Mr. Herb didn't impress me much to start with. But I soon learnt to appreciate his sterling worth. His is a dark view of life perhaps. But it is



nearer the truth than that of most people.'"<sup>233</sup> The major economic problem in most European countries in the period between the two World Wars was the problem of credit inflation: there was too much paper credit being printed by governments, and not enough productive power to back it up. In Vincent's extreme view, prices are inflated partly because the credit system encourages dishonest people to live on false levels. The ultimate victims are the honest citizens, who, like Vincent "are the suckers who pay twice over—for ourselves and for someone else."<sup>234</sup> Vincent's London is riddled with falsity:

'So he went on telling me all about this fantastic House of Cards that is London! I felt as I listened to him that if you blew on it good and hard it would fall to the ground. Half the people who do pay never have any food—they haven't any money left for that after they've met these inflated rentals, the most ruinous income-tax in the world, and all the rest of it. They get thinner and thinner. The only fat ones are those who slip through the net.'

The counterfeiter Vincent is the true representative of this society.

"... it's not me who's absurd. It is the crazy system that produces such a world of façades."<sup>235</sup>

The system of counterfeit credit, of which the forged bank-note is the emblem, is swollen onto a larger field in the novel. The forger takes his place in international political and economic relations as well. The 'phoney war' of September, 1939 through June, 1940 was a prelude to the explosion of real destructive force, and it was secured in part by the false fronts of the Maginot and Siegfried Lines. Again, the 'appeasement' of Hitler at Munich was bought dearly with a phoney note, the 'scrap of paper.' The following excerpt from Winston Churchill's speech made in the House of Commons on the fifth of October, 1938, concerning Chamberlain's Munich settlement, amplifies this point:

At Berchtesgaden. . . E1 was demanded at the pistol's point. When it was given (at Godesberg), E2 was demanded at the pistol's point. Finally





the Dictator consented to take £l. 17s. 6d. and the rest in promises of goodwill for the future. . . . We are in the presence of a disaster of the first magnitude.<sup>236</sup>

As Vincent explained to Dougal Tandish, the 'House of Cards' that was London had nothing to support even these transactions. "' . . . where are the arms with which to call their bluff? . . . . I was talking to a man last week who is a squadron-leader in a Defence of London unit. He told me that if war had been declared at the time of Munich. . . London could have been flattened out."<sup>237</sup>

Lewis uses the image of the card game and the bluff to represent the uncertainty of the venture undertaken by the Chamberlain government. They had purchased a false promise with their real moral commitment:

'B-b-but if Chamberlain flies back. . .without an agreement. . . ?'

'What of it? . . . This is a game of poker, Martin. Why suppose anything else? It's just poker. Chamberlain and Hitler are bluffing us.'<sup>238</sup>

The language of the politicians engaged in these games hints of quackery, and Lewis plays with the stereotypes of contemporary political caricatures to evoke the historical present. In one scene April Mallow reads her Continental Daily Mail and Colonel Tasker his Times. The following exchange evokes the famous political cartoons of David Low:

'The British Prime Minister is speaking to-night, at nine,' the receptionist informed them. 'You listen to him, no?'

. . . . .  
'We shall not be able to, I am afraid,' Mrs. Mallow answered.

'They say he is to lift the veil,' smirked the clerk.

'Ah. Lift the veil?'

She let it be seen that she had no great belief in veil-lifting. She had never known any Prime Minister to lift a veil yet. She questioned if that was what he was going to do. (She belonged to the sealed-lip school herself.)<sup>239</sup>

The leadership of the country, in the hands of the Chamberlain's and Baldwin's for so long, was now proven bankrupt. The class-prejudice which elevated men into positions of power not because of their talents





or training, but because of their connections, had deprived the nation of any reliable reserves of intelligence according to Vincent's analysis:

'You don't have to do any leading. All you have to do, is to open your mouth, and allow a few words to escape, with that magical inflection, hall-marked of Cam or Isis, and it's all right. You are his Leader by virtue of your accent. (Hence the bankruptcy, of leadership.) . . . 'Tis the nice-dog mind, that does it.' Vincent left it at that, with an aggressive shrug.<sup>240</sup>

The 'scrap of paper' ties together the economic and political satire in The Vulgar Streak. The forged note and false credit-slip were in fact demonstrated to be no more than bits of paper which could be printed in any amount to stand for a vastly inflated evaluation of wealth. Similarly, as Lewis employs it, the 'scrap of paper' symbol represents the false token of security bought at Munich.<sup>241</sup> Photographs and newsreels of the period show Chamberlain returning from Munich, umbrella in one hand and a fluttering white note in the other. Contemporary accounts, like that of Churchill already quoted, refer to the agreement as a worthless note. Here, again, Harold Nicolson's reaction to the Munich agreement is recounted:

Chamberlain had the pledge he had hoped for. In the Commons Harold Nicolson denounced it.

'The impression created abroad by that bit of paper was that for the first time in two hundred and fifty years Britain had abandoned her policy of preventing by every means in her power the dominance of Europe by a single Power.'<sup>242</sup>

The phrase was ubiquitous, and it endured in the minds of commentators right through the war. Following, for example, is an excerpt from a letter from Sir Orme Sargent to J.W. Wheeler-Bennett commenting in 1946 on his book Munich: Prologue to Tragedy:

When [Hitler] launched his Sudetan Campaign, he no doubt expected a protest as before followed by a grudging acceptance of the fait accompli. But I doubt whether even he expected Chamberlain to go further than this and in the name of appeasement to coerce the victim and thus legalize and underwrite the rape of Czechoslovakia in return for nothing more than that infamous scrap of paper.<sup>243</sup>



The 'scrap of paper', the playing card, and the forged cheque or credit-slip reinforce each other as symbols in the satiric designs of The Vulgar Streak. Perhaps the final mutation in this series of symbols is the "piece of white paper, in the manner of a placard," attached to the body of Vincent Penhale as it hangs in the Hall. The "resplendent representative of the submerged tenth"<sup>244</sup> had transformed himself into a minor Hitler, and now has blotted himself out. Having tidily left notes behind for the only persons still dependent upon him, Vincent now hangs alone, neatly labelled and ready to be disposed of:

The police constable stepped nearer to the hanging figure. 'Wot's this 'ere?' he asked, pointing to the paper pinned upon its chest. In block letters were written the words:  
 'WHOEVER FINDS THIS BODY MAY DO WHAT THEY LIKE WITH IT. I DON'T WANT IT.  
SIGNED. ITS FORMER INHABITANT.'<sup>245</sup>

#### Part V: A Tradition

'But you are, Vincent,' he objected, 'a mer-mer-mer-man of action. . . . Aren't you! It is a faculty. You her-have it. The hero of Stendhal ab-ab-about whom I wer-wer-was talking. . . hadn't. You mer-must act — or die.'<sup>246</sup>

During his last meal with Martin Penny-Smythe, Vincent declares that Hitler is the 'arch-type' of that sort of man who is all action.  
 "'Our epoch finds its highest expressions in those dynamic puppets—with little names full of a stupid percussion, like Hitler. Our time will go down branded with those six letters.'" Martin points out, however, that there is really nothing new and unique about the modern man-of-action; he is simply a member of a particularly unpleasant tradition in human affairs:

'There was another time,' said Martin, 'also dominated by a mer-mer-man who was made up entirely of action.'

'Which was that?'

'The Napoleonic. A great writer, wer-wer-one of Bonaparte's



commissars, wrote a ber-ber-book. It was called Le Rouge et le Noir.<sup>247</sup>

The main figure in Stendhal's novel, Julian Sorel, like Vincent, is a parvenu who has broken into a class where he does not belong. By an act of will he has transported himself into a higher class, whose privileges he usurps. Ultimately society will make him pay back what he has attempted to steal from it. Ostensibly the account of a social crime, the escape from lowly origins, Le Rouge et le Noir is in fact a study of the man of genius confronting a moribund society. To describe it as an episode of the class-war is misleading, and a vulgarization of the real intention of the work. Lewis discussed this materialistic vulgarization of the conflict between society and its real enemies in his essay "Creatures of Habit and Creatures of Change":

That the only true classes (and in consequence the only true wars, if you believe in the virtues of the crudest animal combat) are biological in character, and not classes based on wealth. . . is the important thing. The conflict between the stupid and the intelligent is the only true one: between those who possess vitality and those who want to lie down, those who want to go forward and those who do not, and those who want to live and those who want to vegetate. All other conflicts are highly artificial, require a constant political or theologic manipulation and a whole gigantic sham structure of hypothesis and illusion to sustain them.<sup>248</sup>

In Le Rouge et le Noir Sorel's intelligence and sensitivity alienate him from his society as no class-barrier could. Sorel plots his propulsion into the higher levels of society with great skill. But he finds no satisfaction in this life of action, and is continually driven back upon his own resources—the life of contemplation. Society in a period of upheaval gives the man of action and ambition an outlet for his enormous energies. But the society is quite incapable of absorbing, nurturing, and utilizing the creative spirits rising up within it. The culture is not ripe; there can be no great art for the 'great race,' to recall Lewis's phrase. Stendhal suggests through the famous judgement of Abbé





Pirard that there is no middle way for Julian Sorel. He will either, like Napoleon, pummel society into a shape he can master, or he will be mastered by society, as a common criminal. Both extremes of Sorel's behaviour are anti-social forms.

In Promenades dans Rome Stendhal reported on the trial of Adrian Laffargue, whose story is the probable source of the novel Le Rouge et le Noir. The conclusion of Stendhal's account of the trial emphasizes the imaginative significance of the activist's energy and intelligence. These qualities are equivocal in these novels of Stendhal and Lewis, for the potential creative power of Julian Sorel and Vincent Penhale is misshapen by the corrupt standards of their societies:

Tandis que les hautes classes de la société parisienne semblent perdre la faculté de sentir avec force et constance, les passions déploient une énergie effrayante dans la petite bourgeoisie, parmi ces jeunes gens qui, comme M. Laffargue, ont reçu une bonne éducation, mais que l'absence de fortune oblige au travail et met en lutte avec les vrais besoins.

Soustraits, par la nécessité de travailler aux mille petites obligations imposées par la bonne compagnie à ses manières de voir et de sentir qui étoient la vie, ils conservent la force de vouloir, parce qu'ils sentent avec force. Probablement tous les grands hommes sortiront désormais de la classe à laquelle appartient M. Laffargue. Napoleon réunit autrefois les mêmes circonstances: bonne éducation, imagination ardente et pauvreté extrême.<sup>249</sup>

By fitting his novel into a pattern established by Stendhal and by Dostoevsky, Lewis universalized the social insight of The Vulgar Streak. The specific details of the social, political, and economic life of Lewis's Britain at the outbreak of the War provide an immediacy of satiric impact. But it is more importantly a type of mind and a style of life that Lewis is satirically examining in his novel. We witness the metamorphoses of a society wrought by a process as much as by a single man:

In Crime and Punishment the hero follows in the footsteps of Julian Sorel (and of Napoleon). It seemed to me that the time had come to add another book to this line that the doctrine extracted by Mussolini from Les Reflections sur la Violence and from Nietzsche (who got his stuff funda-



mentally from Darwin)—it seemed to me that this doctrine taken over by Hitler, and influencing so many minds in Europe, might be made to do its fell work in the soul of a character of fiction, once again. On very different lines, it was time to project another Sorel or Raskolnikoff; whose bug could not be the Napoleonic bug this time, but rather the self-consciousness 'power,' 'force,' and 'action' that has infected so many people today.<sup>250</sup>



## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE HUMAN AGE. MONSTRE GAI. MALIGN FIESTA

In Monstre Gai and Malign Fiesta Lewis continued and extended his mythology of power into the atomic age. He transferred Pullman and Satters from the Bailiff's open-air court in The Childermass to a series of purely urban settings. The cities of the new 'human age' define the existence of Twentieth-century man. They are the centres of post-industrial social stasis, where work and time have no meaning. Having perceived the Magnetic City from a distance as a "city after a tragic exodus," Pullman then found it filled with a stultified populace who are hedged in by stockpiles of their own consumer goods and by the stony architecture of the Bailiff's design.

Increasingly, through the two books, Pullman fills out as a character. He attempts to disassociate himself from his old fleshy companion and begins to test his wits in an attempt to secure a viable role for himself in the Bailiff's system of power.

With Matapolis, Lewis created a demonic city of palpable forcefulness. It is here that Satters, Pullman, and the Bailiff are all tested by the satanic will of Sammael. Here again in Hell, the urban bureaucracy operates with brisk, anonymous efficiency. Technological power is now concentrated under the hands of Sammael, who sweeps Pullman into a frantic race against the pressure of revolutionary human powers. To preserve himself, the homeless Pullman promotes a program of human cross-breeding with the dark angels of Sammael. The menace of this genetically-fixed total alteration of man's nature glaringly challenges the values on which Pullman has lived.



## Part I: Monstre Gai

### A: The City and the Gay Monster

With amazement (Pullman told himself) you discovered that the part you had played on Earth pursued you here, and you found yourself continuing the play. It was made clear to you that the role which had been yours on earth was essentially diabolic.<sup>1</sup>

Twenty-seven years after the appearance of The Childermass, Lewis published the sequels Monstre Gai and Malign Fiesta.<sup>2</sup> Without explanation he plunges in media res. Pullman and Satters, having escaped Camp, huddle together at the walls of the Magnetic City. A waterman has been bribed to ferry the escapees across the river, and Lewis's description of his departure evokes the unstable reality of peonage in the distant Camp:

The waterman was now only a shadow. At last he had gone behind the moon-light. He had passed through a veil of transparent steel. Out of the smoky grey of the waters he rose, lying outlined through the shining wall of the moon. This deaf one-dimensional nonentity it would not be possible to recall.<sup>3</sup>

By contrast with the Camp, the Magnetic City is a space-world. This "blank-gated prodigious city" with its "colossal mushroom-coloured walls" rises over Pullman and Satters as they cringe on its broad marble steps. Pullman is aware that as they sit waiting for a chance to sneak through the city gates, they are vulnerable and exposed. An 'unhidable' figure in the constant deadly glare of huge stars which shine unfiltered by an earthly atmosphere, Pullman contemplates the wisdom of his move: "There was not enough shadow for a mouse to take cover upon this starlit expanse where he and Satters stuck up like a couple of misplaced scare-crows upon a field of virgin corn."<sup>4</sup> Sandwiched between the blank gates of the city rising behind them and the steely mist of the river ahead, they look up into interstellar space:





As night fell they became conscious of the dark pit of the light-years exposed in front of them. . . . The stars were larger and colder than on earth, the sky was a chillier and emptier depth. Pullman was terrified by these enormous glaring worlds and constellations, three times the size they were in the earthly night.<sup>5</sup>

Seeking an escape from the Bailiff's Camp, Pullman and Satters find themselves in what one of the dead citizens describes as "a degenerate, chaotic outpost of Heaven."<sup>6</sup> The titular head of the Magnetic City is a heavenly Angel, The Padishah, but its de facto administrator is an agent of the Devil, the Bailiff. The Bailiff has screened all the appellants for the coveted citizenship of the Magnetic City, and he has selected only the most idle and sensation-hungry candidates for entry. The appellants who made a fetish of youthfulness and who responded automatically to the Bailiff's performances in Camp had gained immediate access to this city. The Bailiff's Elect represent a sort of inversion of the ontological argument for the existence of the Divine. That is, they are the absolutely mediocre. The Bailiff, by smothering their perceptive faculties, had hypnotized the dead in the Camp and had fed their sleepy minds with flattery. He had perpetuated an infantile freedom and irresponsibility in the eternally youthful crowd assembled before his Punch-and-Judy stage. Out of his hysterical child-chorus, the Bailiff willed into existence a civic population of sheep. Having observed this populace idling in their Universal Café and city shopping centres, Pullman imagines the Bailiff's principles of selection:

"Let us keep this city for Mr. Everyman. Let him have a Heaven too. Let us sift those who come here, until we obtain a quintessence of the average,' and it would seem that, through this insistence upon an ideal of averageness, he has produced a horrible nullity."<sup>7</sup>

Daily in the Camp, the Bailiff had exercised his intelligence and energy in the creation of a tractable society for the Magnetic City across the river. His feigned flattery had been a blind for his plans for



efficient civic manipulation. We recall here his 'confession' of his methods to Hyperides at the conclusion of The Childermass:

'It's my usual routine. . .to place at the disposal of his lordship Thomas Thumb Earl of the Earth all the advantages of the great establishment for preserving his highness's personality absolutely inviolate that we have over there and he comes up modestly, secure in the conviction of being passionately loved for his little blinking beaux yeux by an omniscient all-papa waiting to receive him inside.'<sup>8</sup>

With his mad passion for action and change, the Bailiff had kneaded and shaped the crowd for the sheer joy of it. As he warned Hyperides, "Agelong habit has given me an insane hectic appetite for this. . . . You are far too finely made for this, I warn you off this dunghill, it is mine, it has been given me by God, it is mine by divine right and I have a certain fondness for it—not for itself you understand but simply because it is my property."<sup>9</sup>

The City had been designed originally as a sort of Purgatory, "where dubious Christians were tried out, and subsequently either handed over to the Fiend, or promoted to a more select place."<sup>10</sup> As the Bailiff amassed a degree of power commensurate with the vacuity of his subject citizens, the City's rationale was lost. The Padishah, isolated by his intelligence from the realities of low-grade human life in the city, is profoundly and absolutely bored with the welfare of its stupid citizens:

Clearly everything to do with Man filled him with an immense fatigue, a passionate lack of interest. Pullman pitied this winged animal of the Heavens, and thought of the cruelty of God who was to blame in every way for His angel's misery. . . . The classic profile, the calm beauty remained in spite of everything. He governed this city as a god would govern a stinking swamp, or as a man would govern a cemetery full of ill-favoured spectres.<sup>11</sup>

The Padishah does not govern the Magnetic City at all.

By their escape, Pullman and Satters had sought an entrance to Heaven. Instead they have followed the Bailiff into an a-moralist's paradise, where good and bad are merging.<sup>12</sup> The City is drifting towards



Hell. "'Lucifer is planning an all-out attack upon this effete institution,'" Pullman is told. "'At the head of all his flies and vermin, and with the help of a huge fifth column within the Gates.'"13

'This is not Heaven,' announces the heading of the first chapter of Satters and Pullman's escape; and as they crouch on this inhospitable rim of the pit of space, they prepare for total annihilation. "'I feel just as if I were dead this time. I never felt like this before. Oh I do not wish to go through that gate, Pulley!'"14 At last the Bailiff, 'behind time,' arrives and allows them to stumble into the City at the rear of his entourage. They are at once rocked by an instantaneous restoration of their bodily and psychical reality. "Their bodies jumped and exploded as if a djin had got into them," and they find themselves in a scene that obliterates all paradisaal stereotypes:

Underfoot was the slovenly dust of a natural city. Behind them, and above them, the cyclopean battlements rose into the sky. . . . Crawling up those dizzily-mounting walls were iron ladders of the kind used in compliance with the safety requirements, for escape in case of fire. Where they stood. . . was a herbless level earth of parade-ground type. . . . A hundred yards away were the bare sides of modern city blocks, up which zigzagged iron ladders resembling those affixed to the battlements.15

Contemplating this beige city of hard edges and metallic skeleton, we recall a comment Lewis made in 1929, in an analysis of Maxwell Anderson's novel Poor White:

It is plain from the quotations I have given that Mr. Anderson is. . . rebellious to all that giant orthodoxy of mercantile collectivism which is pulverizing the life of the contemporary world, in herding people into enormous mechanized masses. Any independent intelligence, standing aside from the two great hostile sects of Capitalism and Communism, must deplore in the latter, side by side with its doctrine of deliverance, the fact that its Promised Land looks too, in the distance, so like the film Metropolis.16

Fritz Lang's 1926 German film Metropolis metamorphosed the industrial city into a machine devouring its human inhabitants. The bulky mass of the Magnetic City is the rigid shell left by an industrial community.





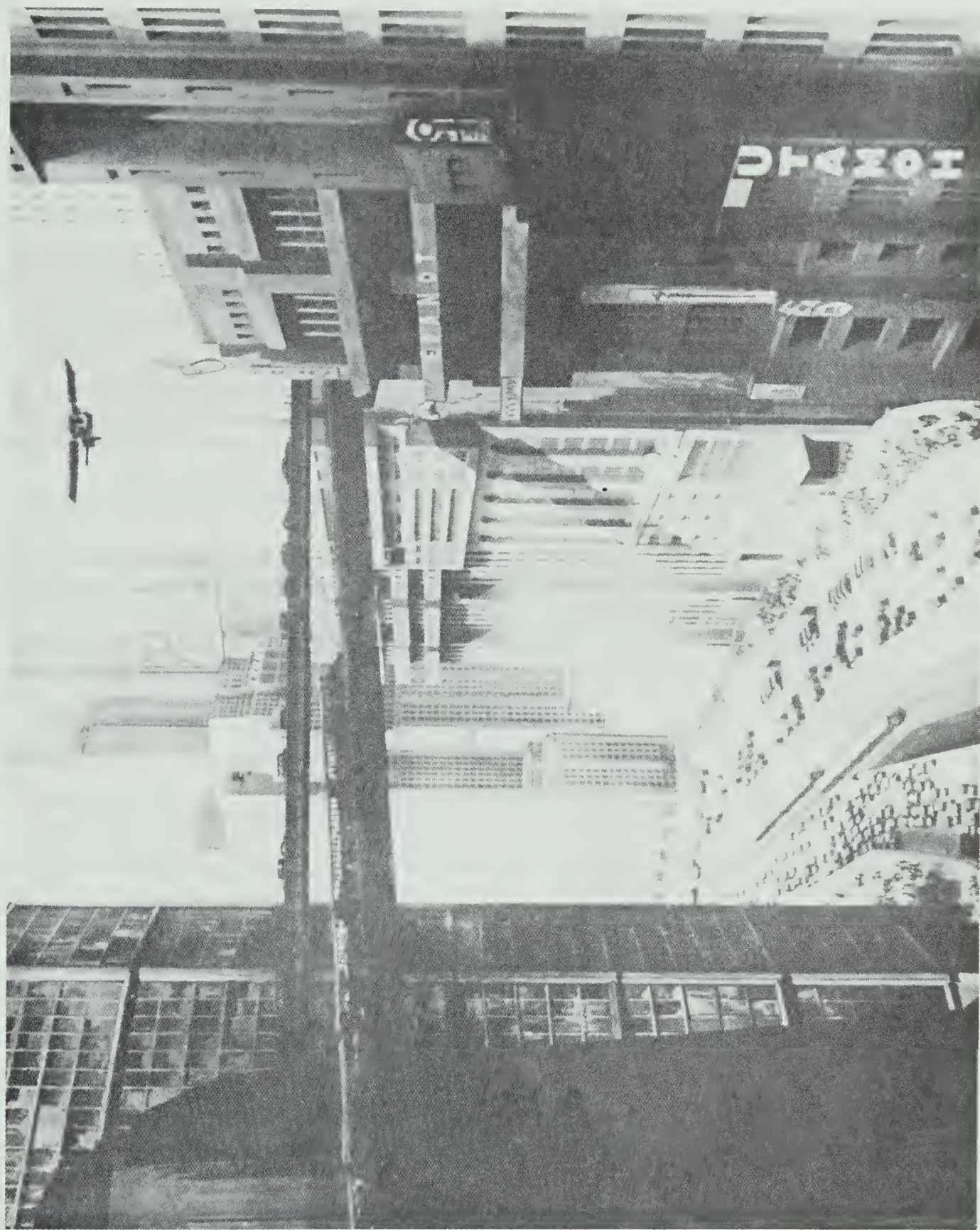


Plate 9





Pullman and Satters enter it in its post-industrial phase, when its productive labour is done by a minority while the mass cope with enforced and subsidized idleness.

The Bailiff has designed the physical lay-out of the Magnetic City along the pattern of Paris under Napoleon. The "cheerless twentieth-century side-street"<sup>17</sup> where Pullman and Satters first enter merges into the broad tree lined Tenth Avenue. The City is built around a central core of three large squares or Piazzas, the First, the Fifth (centre of the City) and the Tenth. Tenth Avenue provides immediate access to these major gathering places in the City, and a Metro system connects them to the radial extremes. The Piazzas combine the political and commercial functions, acting both as town-meeting centres and shopping malls:

It was only a ten-minute Metro journey to the station of Tenth Piazza. When they reached the street level once more, it was to find themselves a few yards from an enormous oblong space almost a mile long, and probably a quarter of a mile across. Heavy, regularly-placed paving stones emphasized its size and emptiness; it was quite without ornament, and down its sides ran a spacious, arched arcade. . . . The effect was South German, and in summer the austerity of the unbroken paved vista was something all its own, an indescribable, accentless void.<sup>18</sup>

Many of the city streets and districts have biblical names. Mannock, the Englishman who befriends Satters and Pullman, puts them up for a time in his apartment in Habakkuk. The servants of the city do the marketing in Maccabees. The void of the spacious Piazzas is duplicated in the traffic-less streets of the city. In the shopping arcades and sidewalk cafés business is thriving, but the arteries of the city are wasted and lifeless. Pullman is struck by this essential stasis as he follows Mannock through Habakkuk. "It did not make him any happier to notice, in the middle of the road, nestling between the cobbles, a cluster of violets peaceably growing. The almost total absence of traffic was somehow not very cheering."<sup>19</sup>



The population of the Magnetic City is entirely male, having been admitted from the Bailiff's Camp through the Yang Gate.<sup>20</sup> Beyond the city is a women's ghetto, the Yenery, where four hundred thousand females have been living in the most abject conditions of imprisonment. Shortly before Pullman's arrival one half of these women committed suicide and were cremated in the City Incinerator.<sup>21</sup> The male population leads a life of demoralizing security. In this city of limited movement, the state provides everyone with an income to match his earthly social level. "'Provided with money by the State, we exist in suspended animation, sexless, vegetarian and dry, permanently about forty-six,'" one citizen tells Pullman.<sup>22</sup> The city is organized around established institutions that cater to every taste. The Central Bank, glass walled and crawling with idle citizens, provides the funds for the free exercise of the will to be satisfied. As Pullman observes the crowds collected at the Bank, where the funds originate to keep them in their indolence, he finds them "an almost frightening spectacle of subsidized futility."<sup>23</sup> All financial matters are handled as it were in public, within the transparent cubicles of the Bank; and an efficient and bland official, "(No. 1051)", coolly amasses data on the newest patron of the state's resources: With perfect suavity and remarkable intelligence, this official politely elicited the kind of place Pullman had occupied in earthly society. At the end of a quarter of an hour during which the answers to the official interrogation had been rapidly noted in a large book, and then added up, as it were, the competent little bureaucrat opened a drawer, and drew out packet after packet of bank-notes.<sup>24</sup>

Once provided with money, the bulk of the citizens spend their days shopping for gaudy clothing and promenading or lounging in the cafés of the city. Mannock conducts Pullman and Satters on a tour to the shopping arcades of Tenth Piazza, where the promenaders are attracted to shop windows like children before television screens:



A dozen people were glued to the window, gesticulating, hissing, and crying out. These window displays were a revelation, to the newcomers, of the city's civilized resources, or as it sometimes seemed to Pullman, uncivilized resources. Very beautifully suited waxen-faced gentlemen, with expressions of ineffable sweetness, and exuding bon-ton, stood in attitudes of impeccable politeness.<sup>25</sup>

Pullman expresses outrage at the hysterical absorption of his fag in the cheap and vulgar wares displayed by the merchants. However, no attempt, private or public, is ever made to curb the appetites of the citizens, and Satters soon dives into a shop to buy a "Fair Isle pullover of the most seductive sort."<sup>26</sup> Pullman's own tastes are much more exacting, but he too spends one whole morning travelling from one obscure shop to another searching out an appropriate outfit. "How was he ever to buy a tie in this city which was not as great an insult to a man's intelligence as a surrealist picture. He had gazed in so many tie-shops, and he had not seen a tie that a sane man would wear."<sup>27</sup>

The Universal Café is the City's most popular meeting place. It is there that Pullman and Satters first meet Mannock, and they return there often to take a coffee and to observe the passing show:

Several thousand chapeaux melons must have been manufactured in a celestial factory, Pullman reasoned; for that number now sat upon as many heads of a massive swarm of café-customers. A mild steady roar came up from this compact collection of nonentities, discharging millions of vocables per minute under their chapeaux melons.<sup>28</sup>

At the edge of this selective mediocrity, Satters is assailed suddenly with a "parabola of soda-water" from a siphon. This scene recalls an incident early in The Childermass, when a pair of peons spit betel-nut juice into Satters's face: "The quizzing frog-figure shoots out a reptilian neck as they begin to move away, launching his dart of black spittle as the other has done. It enters Satters' nostril and breaks round his lips, a viscous fluid scented and bitter."<sup>29</sup> Both of these incidents, recording the retaliation of the herd to a foreign incursion,





suggest a connection with Lemuel Gulliver's initial encounter with the Yahoos in the last book of Gulliver's Travels:

Several of this cursed brood getting hold of the branches behind leaped up into the tree, from whence they began to discharge their excrements on my head: however, I escaped pretty well, by sticking close to the stem of the tree, but was almost stifled with the filth, which fell about me on every side.<sup>30</sup>

Mannock thinks of Swift's Yahoos when he looks across the Piazza at the shoppers milling around the shop windows.<sup>31</sup>

The Magnetic City provides recreation for the socially distinguished class of clubmen like Mannock and his conservative British friends. Passing into a stately building with an imposing front staircase and a uniformed doorman, Pullman and Mannock enter the special sanctuary of the earth's former military and political governing class. It is the Cadogan Club, where in overstuffed armchairs the "faded old satraps"<sup>32</sup> discuss the uneasy peace of the City:

Must they regard themselves as being upon the eve of something which was tantamount to. . . well, to the winding-up of a system which had endured for. . . ! Heavy indignation--deep alarm--profound alarm was certainly the order of the day in the leather upholstered Cadogan.<sup>33</sup>

For all classes of citizen, the city offers sensational pleasures. Pullman sends Satters off on his own for cocoa and a doughnut while he explores a side-street. His attention is drawn to a shop window displaying an "entire shelf of volumes devoted to the Tantra Sutras." A leering passer-by assures him, "'They've got some beauties inside. Extremely dirty. Filthy in fact.'"<sup>34</sup> In another quarter of the city, near St. Anne's Circus, Pullman discovers a series of streets lined with photographer's shops which display naked men photographed in attitudes of homosexual embrace. Art and nature blend in this locale of the pervert:



On the way he encountered some of the living originals of the life-size photographers' groups. They were grey flannel-suited, with flowing Byron collars, horticultural lapels, a heavy swaying of the hips, and great sweeping gestures of the arm in order to pat the back of the hair, or to maintain a silk sleeve handkerchief in place.<sup>35</sup>

The Bailiff does a thriving business in bootlegging liquor, narcotics and cigarettes. For the women prisoners in the Yenery, whom the state provides with a little money, he operates a chain of Lesbian brothels. Hyperides, in his deep and thrilling voice, exposes the Bailiff's racketeering. "'He owns Lesbian brothels, a hundred gambling dens, and waxes fat (as you see him) upon the heart-break and the madness which proliferates in that ghastly ghetto.'" <sup>36</sup> The Bailiff condemns himself out of his own mouth, as he lets his mind wander over his property. "'The wild women--the wild, wild women. . . ! You know the way the song went. A quite sensible, popular ditty, my dear Pullman!'" <sup>37</sup>

The Bailiff's screening methods determine his clientele, and his illicit traffic in 'cigareets, and whiskey, and wild, wild women' provides him with unlimited finances. He has set himself up in a palace, with a civil guard and a militia for show. He has abandoned his Camp masquerade as a hump-backed Zagreus, and he pulls on in its place the clothing of an ambassador. "He was now a very different figure from the barbaric, theatrical figure of the Camp. He was dressed in a dinner-jacket, with a soft white shirt, the wide scarlet ribbon of some order appearing above his waistcoat and crossing his stomach, while in his hand he held a large Havana cigar." <sup>38</sup> Pullman reports to Mannock after a party at the Bailiff's palace, "'He is rather like a city-boss in the United States, and if you are in such a city you have to be very careful not to displease him--especially if your stay in that city is to be prolonged.'" <sup>39</sup>



The Bailiff's main source of administrative power in the city is his extraordinary intelligence system. He has laid out the piazzas and avenues of the city for maximum concentration of the citizens and for ease of access by the police. The Piazzas, connected by the Metro, are the centres of political energy. In Fifth Piazza, for example, the citizens receive a deputation of monsters from Hades, and in Tenth Piazza, a large public debate ends in the assassination of Hyperides. The Bailiff governs by a cell-system of infiltration. He is at the centre of a spider web of telephone lines connecting him with his paid informers in all quarters of the city. His office is a bureaucratic complex of great efficiency:

'In every group of six sub-sections of every district of the city he has an informant, a whole-time informant. In our office there are forty clerks receiving and filing messages all day long. There is an overseer: if one of the thirty telephonists or one of the filers regards a certain piece of news as hot, he goes across to the overseer. If the overseer thinks it is news which the Bailiff should know at once, he rings a bell. . . . Within minutes the Bailiff is in possession of the news.<sup>40</sup>

Both the Bailiff's city planning and his technology make him master of the city. He has control of a number of devices which eliminate the private, personal lives of his citizens. As Pullman discovers, "'There is not a man who wipes his glasses, or one who buys a flower and sticks it in his buttonhole, but the Bailiff hears about it within a couple of minutes.'"<sup>41</sup>

The Bailiff has positioned loudspeakers in the streets and dispatches sound trucks past the homes and apartments of the Magnetic City. After the first of Lucifer's attacks on the city, for example, "a small motor vehicle with a very loud mechanical voice bursts into Habakkuk," sternly shouting emergency instructions to the neighbourhood. The truck, like all the Bailiff's mechanized communications devices, is shrill and





insistent:

'TO ALL CITIZENS. STOP INDOORS UNTIL THE CITY SERVICES HAVE REMOVED THE FLIES FROM THE STREETS. THEY WILL NOT BE LONG. CITIZENS! THE GAS AND ELECTRICITY IS BEING ATTENDED TO. PATIENCE CHILDREN. PATIENCE. IT WILL NOT BE LONG NOW!'<sup>42</sup>

The Bailiff's workers direct searchlights over the crowd during the spectacle of a theatrical town-meeting by moonlight.<sup>43</sup> In this leisured city of little traffic, there are no privately-operated vehicles. When Pullman needs a taxi he must use the Bailiff's telephone system to call it<sup>44</sup>—or he may find the Bailiff's chauffeur and limousine waiting for him at his door.<sup>45</sup> At the Bailiff's party, Pullman tries out a listening device which resembles the index finger of a human being. Stationed in a theatre box at one side of the room, Pullman points this "almost invisible, pencil-like object, which was looped around his forefinger" toward another guest. He covertly listens-in to the other's conversation.<sup>46</sup> Pullman also learns at the party that the intelligence registered by Official Number 1051 at the Central Bank is available to the Bailiff.<sup>47</sup>

The Bailiff's primary instrument of control in the city is his business-like telephone. When he picks up the telephone he makes instant contact with a functionary of his administration at the other end. His telephone is the extension of his will and the spur to instant action.<sup>48</sup> "The Bailiff walked quickly over to the telephone. 'I am going to speak to the Police President.' It was hardly a minute when the Police President was there, and the Bailiff indulging in his usual noisy facetiousness."<sup>49</sup> Pullman can feel no humanity in the Bailiff's mechanical control of the city. When the Padishah sends him an invitation by sparrow messenger, Pullman contrasts the celestial and business-like sensibilities of these rival powers. The Bailiff's parting words, "You will be visited by a sparrow," return to Pullman's mind:



'A childish substitution for a telephone!' he mentally agreed with the Bailiff's implied sneer. . . . Although St. Francis was not his favourite Saint, he preferred a world in which St. Francis would feel at home because of the presence of winged creatures, to a Bailiff-world of pragmatic exclusiveness. He knew there would be no wings in a Bailiff-world except left-wings: in the view of the 'good old Bailey', he was sure, the sparrow parasitically infested the air--of no food value, and inclined to give elderly persons of the female sex something to live for!<sup>50</sup>

The Bailiff manifests a total devaluation of every human value. As a 'Professor of Energy' in a hand-picked society of morons, he values only action, acquisition, and ego. "'Useful? A beautifully cut suit is one of the most useful things a man can have. How wise you are. . . !'" the Bailiff crows to Pullman.<sup>51</sup> Pullman witnesses in Tenth Piazza a dramatic confrontation of the theocratic tradition, the communists, the fascists, and the Bailiff, all hectoring the crowd for political support. He sees that the Bailiff offers no philosophy. "The other Power which could be seen defending itself in this market-place, the Piazza, was gangster wealth at its most irresponsible, represented by the Bailiff."<sup>52</sup> The Bailiff sells shirts and ties to the outlawed Hell-boys who periodically invade the suburbs of the city.<sup>53</sup> He has installed in his Palace, in the foyer at the entrance to his office, a large nude statue of some classical Venus which revolves slowly on a pedestal. As Pullman leaves the Bailiff after an interview, he thinks back on this emblem:

The Venus still slowly turned near the summit of the house; as her buttocks came round in front of the spectator there was a poop, and as she reversed, her face appearing, she apologized, in a voice obnoxiously dulcet. Toys of the millionaire! All the Bailiff's toys would insult human dignity. . . .<sup>54</sup>

Her periodic fart and automatic, ingenuous apology distinguish the Bailiff's Venus as an insulting futurist work--the embodiment of crude action in sculpture.

The oily efficiency of the Bailiff's bureaucratic civic adminis-



tration, with its instant telephone relay of information and its carefully-staged public shows, is a façade only of the real powers battling for control of the city. Faced with direct combat between the Padishah and Lucifer, the Bailiff confesses that he is only an opportunist bandit. His little personal militia of heiduks and gladiators is unauthorized and poorly equipped. "'I parade it as a mere circus, so that I can say that it is not serious. . . . My whole existence is a pure bluff.'"55

Behind all his frenetic activity and managerial aplomb, the Bailiff is only a sham commander:

One day a battalion of the 'Guards' marched down beside the Bailiff's parade ground--band playing, a proper military band, officers on horse-back, each man with white kid gloves and white leather beltings, all of them tall, moving proudly and with great precision. The Bailiff's fantastic militia, dressed like performers in a ballet, watched these real troops in silence; afterwards a number of them deserted.<sup>56</sup>

His suave command breaks down in the face of an allegiance between the Padishah and the Christian community in the city. The Bailiff's true party is that of the monsters whom Lucifer sends out from Hell. Neither the Bailiff's ambassadorial dress nor his official shield of executive privacy completely masks this fellowship:

To a roar of fear, of disgust, of half-human cries, snorts, and gasps, advanced pirouetting the double line of demons hoofed and horned, frisking and cavorting, ogling and grimacing, and, not by any means least, emitting the most revolting stench. This assailed the noses of all the spectators, however far away, the moment they made their appearance. As they advanced with every step they stank still more, and the smell developed intolerably.<sup>57</sup>

The Bailiff had marched into the city behind a banner bearing the images of the Serpent, the Mundane Egg and the Fish, inscribed with the ten names of God. Surmounting, and as it were bridging these symbols is the number 666, cabbalistic symbol of the Beast of the Apocalypse and concomitantly of the Great Beast of Great Britain, Aleister Crowley. In the Revelation of John, the prophet speaks of "a beast coming up out of





the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake like a dragon."

In order that man might worship him, the beast gives them his mark:

"Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six."<sup>58</sup> In his Confessions, Aleister Crowley gives the following account of his name and number:

There was no doubt a certain brooding of the Holy Spirit of Magick upon the still waters of my soul; but there is little evidence of its operation. I never lost sight of the fact that I was in some sense or other The Beast 666. There is a mocking reference to it in 'Ascension Day' lines 98 to 111.

.....  
My mother believed that I was actually Anti-christ of the Apocalypse and her poor lost erring son who might yet repent and be redeemed by the Precious Blood.<sup>59</sup>

At first Pullman continues to refer to the city by the name by which it had been known in the Camp, but he soon hears the name its inhabitants have for it, Third City.<sup>60</sup> A friend of Mannock's speculates on the meaning of Third City:

'It is,' Rigate intervened, 'the decay of an at one time more sensible system; that is all I can suppose. Perhaps this was a place where dubious Christians were tried out, and subsequently either handed over to the Fiend, or promoted to a more select place. As it is, what are those other cities? Is City One a city of Saints? But this magnetized metropolis has obviously lost its rationale.'<sup>61</sup>

Lewis may have in mind here a term used by Etienne Gilson in his foreword to the Fathers of the Church translation of St. Augustine's City of God. In this essay, Gilson commented that St. Augustine envisions two metaphorical cities: Jerusalem, vision of peace, and Babylon, Babel or confusion, both of which coexist through eternity. Modern man, Gilson wrote, is attempting to found a secular city of temporal reality in the grey space between the polarities of peace and confusion:

If we examine St. Augustine's own teaching more closely, we shall see why the notion of a temporal human society, endowed with its own unity and including the whole human race, could not present itself to his





mind. The two cities which he describes are, as we have seen, mystical, that is supernatural, in their very essence. The one is the City of truth, of the good, of order, of peace; it is, indeed, a true society. The other, since it is defined as the denial of the former, is the city of error, of evil, of disorder and confusion; it is, in fact, a mockery of a society worthy of the name. Midway between these two cities, of which one is the negation of the other, there is situated a neutral zone where the men of our day hope to construct a third city, which would be temporal like the earthly city, yet in a temporal way, that is striving toward a temporal justice obtainable by appropriate means. Such an idea seems never to have occurred to St. Augustine; at least, he never spoke of it.<sup>62</sup>

The Third City designed and administered by the Gay Monster the Bailiff is drifting ever closer to Hell, the negative pole of the fiction. The Bailiff explains the phenomenon in physical terms. "'Heaven and Hell are much too near together geographically, and the same applies to Third City—that is much too near Hell.' He pointed through the window. 'Hell is just over there. Things have progressed as they have down on earth. These opposites are far too near together for modern conditions.'"<sup>63</sup> From the Camp side of the river in The Childermass the City had been metamorphosed into a pale ziggurat, the vision of Babberl'n. ". . .a mirage arises from the further edge of the water, having the consistency and the tint of a wall of cheese, but cut into terraces full of drowsy movement which are reflected in the stream."<sup>64</sup> Like the biblical tower erected to reach the skies, the Magnetic City thrusts its prodigious mushroom coloured walls out into space, and draws down upon itself fire from Heaven and Hell alike.

#### B: Pullman and the Citizens

In dress suit, Pullman attends the Bailiff's party "like Cinderella going to the great party at the Palace."<sup>65</sup> The Bailiff's limousine shoots him through the gates and courtyard at the entrance to a magnificent structure, and he sweeps through the foyer past the Bailiff's



gangs of uniformed soldiers and liveried servants. He does not see the Bailiff at first, but rather strolls about the huge gallery, "of cathedral-like dimensions," a Manhattan appearing magically in one hand and a Corona -Corona in the other. The Bailiff, un-official emissary from Hell, has designed this room to provide the maximum sensation of coolness. He is stationed on a platform stage near the centre of the room, behind a tall fountain of icy water. Radiating out from this chill centre, the crowd grows thicker and more raucous. The Bailiff provides a company of Square Men, psychic filters who massage the soul and cleanse it of promiscuous impulses. Pullman begins to understand that one came to these parties, "not to be with people—but to enjoy the contact of the lunar influences, and to relish humanity, (if at all) in an icebox."<sup>66</sup> Every feature of the décor imposes an icy douche on the flash and fire of human impulse. "There was no colour hotter than metallic black and silver, and all the blacks were cold blacks." An orchestra plays Alban Berg's lyric suite as Pullman orientates himself in the Bailiff's environment:

The plants, of which there were a great number, had no flowers: their greens were all of the cactus type, preferring a desertic green, bordering on blue: and geometric designs in white representing glittering flowers, at times mixed with steel and nickel, bore out the master idea of the décor. And it became unmistakable that the impulses of a polar, rather than the multitudinous and sultry, the garish and burning element of a tropical scene, were aimed at, and icily carried out.

Against this universal, basic determination to be cool at all costs, Pullman was subtly assailed by the hectic scent of the man-goats of Hell. . . .<sup>67</sup>

As Pullman pushes through to the clear cool space around the Bailiff's stage he hears the familiar crowing voice. "'Ah ha, welcome Pullman—welcome to Eternity!'"<sup>68</sup>

Security arrangements at the Padishah's Palace are much tighter. Armed guards stand at the entrance to a white block of offices in a



small square. Pullman is questioned before he may pass through a wicket and begin his descent to the Padishah's underground court. This heavily-guarded retreat resembles an air-raid shelter or a bunker:

On the farther side was the subterranean palace of the Padishah, before which sentries paraded up and down. Officials approached, and once more the password was demanded. Then the list of visitors was produced, and their names checked. After that they entered the palace. A horde of attendants and guards swarmed around them. Then, without any further holdup, they entered the chamber in which the Governor was in the habit of receiving people. It was of puritanic simplicity, not very large. Even the guests, perhaps fifteen in number, seemed muted, their heads inclined as if in prayer.<sup>69</sup>

The Padishah himself is dressed in a close-fitting white coat, like the achkan coat of Jawaharlal Nehru, first Premier of India. Hedged in by the Bailiff's busyness and distanced from the moronic majority of the city population, the Padishah expresses an "unfathomable boredom" in his governorship. He speaks pleasantly to all his visitors, and then, "with an expression of despair," he exclaims to Pullman, "'You should get [Mannock] to take you into the farmlands over there. They are fresh and beautiful.'" In this desolate setting, an attendant of the Padishah screams out suddenly. "He had seen a vision, it seemed, in which a demon was standing behind the Padishah with a raised arm about to plunge a knife into his back." The Padishah can offer neither explanation nor consolation, but merely "rolled up his eyes with infinite distress, but did not look towards the still kneeling man."<sup>70</sup>

Pullman's encounters with these two rival powers precipitates his personal election of allegiance. Soon after his arrival he has seen signs and tokens of the presence of the miraculous in Third City. Just before his melancholy visit to the Padishah's bunker Pullman reflects on the Bailiff's attractive power. "'The Old Bailey' and himself would certainly find it difficult to agree upon many matters. But they were





matters which need never be mentioned by either of them. . . ."71 When Pullman leaves the Padishah he rationalizes his repudiation of the divine:

Pullman took in a deep breath. 'Now to be a real angel, and just on the same principle, to be God, you must be entirely stupid. . . . Here—in Third City—we are frail, puny, short-lived, ridiculous, but we are superior, preferable to the Immortals with whom we come in contact.'72

Human intelligence, he concludes, is the only real value in the deranged circumstances of Third City. He chooses the Bailiff of the knaves' party rather than the Padishah of the fools'. "'For the wicked Bailiff could not exist without the stupid Padishah. They are complementary figures. One exists, as a corollary of the other. . . . The number of knaves who are bred out from one big fool is amazing.'"73

As soon as his loyalty is determined, Pullman is taken to inspect an apartment the Bailiff has rented for him in the Phanuel Hotel. Phanuel station on the Metro is also the stop for the Bailiff's Palace, and from Pullman's Apartment 400, he can see the barracks and parade ground for the Bailiff's garrison.74 Pullman is installed in his new quarters on a Friday. All the appointments are luxurious in the spacious private rooms of Apartment 400 in the Phanuel Hotel. Pullman finds a silver horn for telephone communications with the Bailiff. Copies of his own best-selling books are displayed in the living room. "Pullman did not utter a word. At length, sinking into the silken billows of a sumptuous settee, he spoke. 'This is authentic! This, beyond the shadow of a peradventure, is Heaven.'"75 In this private hotel built by the Bailiff, next door to his Palace and managed by the Bailiff's men, Pullman forges his connection with the Gay Monster:

As unattached as the 'lone wolf' man, of the fierce modern 'genius' type, believing not in God, in class, in party, but solely in himself, it was



all one to him who it was supporting Pullman; anyone who did so was a good man.

Most of his real prejudices were alien to all the philosophic attitudes of the Bailiff. Nevertheless, all his career-life he had been supported by persons identical with the Bailiff, and he had always lived with, been buzzed around and been rubbed against by, ideas which were the Bailiff's ideas (and many of them were his own, contradicting mere prejudice); so his present supernatural life was preordained.

Pullman has installed himself in the sumptuous privacy of Apartment 400 with the dim project in mind of building himself up as a saint. "This place might still be serviceable as a testing-out place for Heaven. Indeed that may be the only avenue of escape," he assures himself.<sup>76</sup>

In the exclusive restaurant of the Phaniel Hotel, Pullman enjoys his first meal of animal flesh since entering the vegetarian Third City. The menu offers a choice between Boeuf à la mode d'Autrefois and Cotelette des Neiges d'Antan. He completes the meal with a carafe of Consommation Rouge en Surprise. The name Phaniel Hotel is an ironic echo perhaps of the 'Cradle of Liberty,' Faneuil Hall in Boston, Massachusetts.<sup>77</sup> It is to be his springboard, Pullman thinks, for his translation to a better place. Within sight and hearing of the Bailiff's parade ground and shaded by the city tree the modest birch (sacred to the thunder gods Thor and Donar) Pullman makes himself at home:

That evening Pullman had dinner in his sitting-room. He took down a copy of the Odyssey. 'What more appropriate for the supernatural wanderer?' In the psychological region of Calypso he sank into the pneumatic wonders of his bed; soon, before he had extinguished his light, he had fallen asleep, he was dreaming of treacherous magicians, of smoke, and of unknown skies.<sup>78</sup>

One of Pullman's first insights in Third City is that he must rid himself of the embarrassing presence of Satters. Satters has rapidly become a delinquent in the indulgent juvenile city. He runs about with gangs, drinking and mugging the unwary citizens. Each time the police catch him, they send him back to Pullman, "as if it were a case of lost



property.'" From the moment when the two bodies of the escapees were revitalized, Satters has been disgustingly physical. His bladder is weak, his appetite enormous, and he pouts and blubbers when Pullman goes off without him. Pullman, meanwhile, is carefully cultivating his role as a distinguished author and intellectual visitor from Earth. He disencumbers himself of this unwelcome legacy of his schooldays, "this ignoble Caliban."<sup>79</sup> It is only when Pullman takes up residence in the Phanuel Hotel and begins to groom himself for sainthood, that he readmits Satters. The ex-fag, rescued from the gutter of Third City and tidied up in a smart uniform, becomes Pullman's 'brother.'<sup>80</sup>

The Bailiff has frozen most of the population of Third City in a perpetual youthful irresponsibility. Pullman recognizes that he has 'escaped' to a city composed of the "hysterical child-chorus of the Bailiff's Tribunal. It is pathetic. Perhaps fifty percent of the city is the desiccated remains of the youth-propaganda of forty years ago."<sup>81</sup> The maturity of these artificially-preserved citizens is arrested throughout their stay in the Magnetic City. Some were young when they arrived, like the tall young man with an actorish face and a furred overcoat cut like a dressing-gown, whom Pullman encounters in the street. "'I am twenty-one. Merely to be young—to be slender, for one's face to be like a poem, for one's body to smell like fresh-cut flowers, for one to be free because one wants nothing—that is paradise! Who wants to be a rich old man, or a man possessed of power? All I want is to be young."<sup>82</sup> Other citizens were arrested at middle-age, but they sustain a second childhood of the intellect in this heaven for the young. Still others are pathetically out of time with rapid acceleration of social change in the years since they died; for they have been here for centuries:





Having reached this strange city, they must have begun a mode of life quite different from what now obtained; as fashions changed on earth they would change too, at length becoming haggard doctrinaires of Youth, as they were at present. Did they look back? Hardly that, seeing that in order to remain real they must passionately adhere to the fashion. . . . They must sometimes find themselves using expressions which they could not explain, or thinking in a way long discarded, which they could not understand. As he thought about them, Pullman marvelled at this population, living fanatically in a period which was not theirs. This, he reflected, is what would happen on earth if there were no death. Men would be whispering to you of how the Vikings first landed; or would tell you how they had seen Charles the Second, very elegant and smiling graciously, arrive back to take his throne.<sup>83</sup>

Mannock's philosophical houseboy Platon, like the Germans and Swiss Pullman finds playing chess in a secluded café,<sup>84</sup> repudiates the infantilism of Third City. "'The stupid lies they print in the Bulletin must end.'" he tells Pullman. "'We are poor miserable half-men, yes. But we are not idiots!'" His eyes blazed with intelligent indignation."<sup>85</sup> At another point, Platon skims through the city journal with distaste. "'Do they take us for damfools ah! Their Bulletin--their Bully - ly - teen!"<sup>86</sup> This formulation of disgust suggests 'John Bull,' 'bull' or nonsense, lies, 'bullying,' and 'teens' or youth. Pullman can find few allies in this adolescent society brutalized by the Bailiff and scorned by the Padishah. His gravitation towards a centre of intelligible power is in part a defection from a degraded species:

He thought of the scene outside the city gates, when he and Satters were alone with the implacable, starry face of these regions of the universe. Here inside, surrounded by man again, their perspective was unreal, was falsely human. These were unearthly regions, and their perspective a truly fearful one.<sup>87</sup>

### C: Storm and Flight

Lucifer's attacks on Third City begin soon after Pullman enters the city, on a day he mythologizes as "Black Tuesday."<sup>88</sup> The scope of the destruction, the stages of its growth, and its effects on the city link it with the atomic bomb developed by America and first dropped on





human targets at Hiroshima in August, 1945. The attack on Third City begins suddenly and without warning: "A blast, rather than a flash of lightning, a hundred times brighter and colder than any day, stamped out everything in blinding black and white upon the human retina." Following this flash is a shock, or blast, "as if the blackness had spoken."<sup>89</sup> Next is a phenomenon of sound, "a world embracing Hiss," which drives every other sensation out of Pullman's consciousness so that he lives only as a congealed and armoured mechanism"<sup>90</sup> through the balance of the attack. Immediately after the shock, a violent wind rushes through the city, crashing a stone "the size of the Sphinx" into the Central Bank. The wind forcing through every crack in the structures of the city transmits an intense heat. Citizens who are not mummified or unconscious like Pullman, are grilled alive in this firestorm. Then a dark cloud stands high over the city and empties itself "in the form of a malodorous liquid" which asphyxiates the populace.<sup>91</sup> Deluges of flies and locusts finally beat down on the paralyzed city as an even more violent battle begins out of range of human consciousness:

Its major features were the percussion of great voices, words used as missiles the size of houses, and then what the human soldiers would have recognized as the sound of warfare in the twentieth-century sense, so magnified as to be aurally unmanageable. The apparent slamming of monstrous doors would correspond for those attuned to terrestrial battle, with the detonation of shells and bombs. . . . What would not be familiar to the human soldier would be the three or four mammoth voices on high, crashing out the alphabet of Heaven and of the Pit. The nasal tongues of giant viragos at one time conducted a screaming argument among the clouds, which, if translated, was totally absurd.<sup>92</sup>

After this violent disruption of physical and psychological reality, a profound and universal silence descends on the City. When Pullman regains consciousness and tours the severely-damaged districts, he notes the effects of the attack. "How hideously deserted it was; how all this peculiar world he had escaped into was getting to look like



war-scenery, like blasted cities."<sup>93</sup> Everyone still living in Third City after the attack notices a change in the atmosphere. Many suspect that a poison has been discharged into the air, perhaps from the dark cloud and Spout. People collapse and die days later in the streets.<sup>94</sup> The City has been irremediably altered by the first of Lucifer's attacks, and the citizens live on in a hysterical fatigue aggravated by their fear of the unknown debilitating disease among them:

That day both had felt increasingly exhausted and depressed, a sort of delayed shock; of an even more extended type than that of which Mannoek had heard in the Cadogan club, experienced by many people in the city. There were many cases of hysteria, and hysterical ailments. The hospitals were crammed; the doctors and orderlies, sick themselves, were in no shape to cope with this mass of ailing people.<sup>95</sup>

Under the chapter heading "Invisible Contamination," Robert Jay Lifton describes the experience of atomic attack on the minds of survivors in Hiroshima:

These manifestations of toxic radiation effects aroused in the minds of the people of Hiroshima a special terror, an image of a weapon which not only instantly kills and destroys on a colossal scale but also leaves behind in the bodies of those exposed to it deadly influences which may emerge at any time and strike down their victims. This image was made particularly vivid by the delayed appearance of these symptoms and fatalities--two to four weeks later--in people who had previously seemed to be in perfect health and externally untouched.<sup>96</sup>

The survivors of the attack in the Bailiff's City share these features of atomic shock.

Lucifer launches a similar attack while Pullman is in the Bailiff's care in the Phaniel Hotel. As the Padishah mobilizes his forces to oppose Lucifer, Pullman and Satters prepare themselves for a flight from the city under the Bailiff's wing. One day a huge hairy forefinger of one of the Padishah's bodyguards fills Pullman's room and points at him menacingly. Packing a clean shirt and a dozen white handkerchiefs, Pullman and Satters fly off to Hell with the Bailiff.<sup>97</sup>



## Part II: Malign Fiesta

### A: Introduction. Sammael and Dis

[Pullman] had known that there was such a thing as the Right and the Wrong; that there was no such thing, for a man, as 'Beyond good and evil'. That was merely the self-advertising eccentricity of an intellectual. Christianity apart, these values of Good and of Bad dominated human life, at its deepest level. On Earth, life was usually lived at a superficial level. Fundamental values played very little part in the conduct of life; and that was the reason for the frightful dilemma in which he found himself; because he inherited a superficial habit of mind.<sup>98</sup>

In Malign Fiesta Pullman perceives the logical consequences of the conduct of his life. Both during his life and after death he has allied himself with sources of pure power. Like the Bailiff, Pullman set himself above human values, and exploited the weakness of others—of Satters for instance—to magnify his own ego. When he arrives in the Bailiff's home city of Matapolis, Pullman gravitates at once to its centre of power: the Lord Sammael, Satan. Although the bagman Bailiff has come equipped with his customary bag of tricks,<sup>99</sup> Sammael ruthlessly strips him of power for his part in the Third City Fiasco against the Padishah. The Bailiff had expected this punishment. "'Soon I may find myself stripped of the power which I have so painfully built up for myself. And have so long enjoyed.' He stamped and waved his hand around the study. "'The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces.'" All this may go."<sup>100</sup>

Pullman learns nothing from the fall of this failed magician. Instead, after touring Dis, Sammael's punishment centre for the sinners delivered to him by God, Pullman allies himself with this agent of destruction, for whom human existence is valueless. The Lord Sammael, in his implacable enmity to human kind, operates a theatre of punishment with horrible efficiency. To the Dis technicians the frail human





material they work over is an evil necessary for the on-going experimentation.

With the aid of human intelligence like Pullman's Sammael plans a revolutionary modification of his Dark Angels. He plans to mate the angels' strength and longevity with female human sinners. Through the new mutation, Sammael hopes to free himself and his angels from their odious role in "a phoney cosmic dualism"<sup>101</sup> which God has thrust on them. Pullman throws his energies and intelligence with gusto into Sammael's project. He devises a spy service to prevent news leaks, and he re-instates the Bailiff, steel helmetted, at its head.<sup>102</sup>

Pullman sets up as a professor in a new university for humanizing the angelic natures of Sammael's tribe. In Haus Europa, the angels learn human languages and something of the history and politics of earthly society. As Sammael observes, Pullman is presiding over a sort of 'balkanization' of the angelic sensibility.<sup>103</sup> Pullman's propaganda centre prints thousands of pamphlets announcing the dawn of a new Human Age. "In a day-long debate," Sammael deploys all his arguments in favour of the angel revolution, which he advertises as a tribute to progress:

The closing, before long, of Dis was foretold. Was it not a barbarous survival? The angel community was destined for great things. With their supernatural advantages they would go far, if they abandoned their age-old lethargy and launched out into a new life.<sup>104</sup>

All the time Pullman works for Sammael, he is uneasy in the deepest recesses of his mind. "His communings with God, indeed his prayerful dependence upon his patron's great enemy, increased." Every night a contrite Pullman confesses to God all that he has done for Sammael that day. "He was never quite certain as to the reality of a prayer, or if it could find its way into ears for which it was not intended."<sup>105</sup> Sammael's



project comes to a climax in a grand Fiesta of angels and women, celebrated all day and night in Angeltown. In the months following the Fiesta, thousands of angels decide to take wives.<sup>106</sup> Hospitals are built for the angelic community as it approaches its era of mortality.<sup>107</sup> Pullman and Sammael draw up plans for a political elite to govern the new society. Heavenly communications with Matapolis are broken off, and suddenly the White Angels descend on Sammael's city. As the battle begins, Pullman is whisked away to face judgement at the throne of God.

### B: Pullman as Voyager

Pullman first appeared in The Childermass as a stranger wandering on the shore of a filthy and unknown Styx. He is irremediably restless in exploring his new worlds. When he sneaks across the river into Third City he travels purely on speculation, with no clear idea of his destination. Once he and Satters have trailed through the city gates, "a most inelegant bedraggled appendage"<sup>108</sup> to the Bailiff's troops, they sense that their appetite for change has placed them in jeopardy:

It was like a new impalpable film, or new atmosphere, into which they had unwittingly penetrated. It held them as it repelled them, like an existential element, neither cold nor warm, but subtly terrifying. The appalling attraction of the black chasm of the sky and this new insidious element, belonging to the gigantic walls, competed for a while for the mastery of their shrinking spines: but the nearer of these two influences in the end alone remained. Everything else faded out into the foreground.<sup>109</sup>

Flight away from Third City is again a leap into the dark. With seeming carelessness, Pullman takes a draught of the Bailiff's travel drug so that in close magnetic contact he can fly through the ether and escape the Padishah's siege of the Bailiff's Palace:

'Well, here goes,' said Pullman. 'It is a case of "TAKE ME" isn't it?'

It was instantaneous--had Pullman been flung into a furnace the reaction would have been immediate and blindingly similar. There was one second exactly as the liquid in the bottle sank into his body, during



which the Bailiff's face became for him a vivid red. Then came utter blackness, as he felt himself hurled through the air. Pullman was getting smaller and smaller as they hurtled with increasing speed. He became just a metaphysical appendage of this great pasha in flight from his shaking palace.<sup>110</sup>

Pullman has attached himself and Satters once again to the hurrying figure of the Bailiff, and they fly together through the Alice in Wonderland space-world of relativity.

As soon as he arrives in Matapolis, Pullman realizes that he has made a mistake. Like an animal suddenly thrust into an unfamiliar setting, he begins to probe its strangeness. "Pullman shut himself off from his companion in order to take stock—in order to gather together his sensations since he had begun to resume his very problematical existence in these new surroundings—to scrutinize them and see what they added up to —these reactions to what was not only a new place but a new situation."<sup>111</sup> All his reactions to the "aggressive sense of nothingness" in the Bailiff's home city are displeasing. The smell of Hell is everywhere, and Pullman reads a parasitic mockery of humanity in the faces of the Bailiff's servants, for whom life is death: "The two grey-faced domestics brooded all day, no doubt upon delicious Sinners, subtly robbed of their beauty, or gallant gentlemen, reduced to whimpering shadows of themselves. . . . The Bailiff's protégés had not seen the cold glare of anticipation, but Pullman, at least, had registered the violence lurking in this cemetery of Sinners, each exhausted spectre cemented into the ghastly minds of this pseudo-humanity, whose life was death."<sup>112</sup> Conscious of his culpability in leading Satters into this city of the Abyss, Pullman takes his hand and attempts to still its trembling. "'If this is the jumping-off ground for nothingness there are far worse things than nothingness,'" he tells him.<sup>113</sup>





Pullman, the energetic leader and master mariner of new worlds, continually jumps off into the face of nothingness. He is Ulysses, the archetypal human voyager whose restlessness leads to new worlds of experience. A stranger and a pilgrim<sup>114</sup> in new environments, he always lands on his feet and exercises his native cunning in the fight for survival. The Lord of Hell observes Pullman's human intelligence at work. "'I can see that you are like the wily Ulysses,' Sammael laughingly remarked."<sup>115</sup> Pullman's connection with the mythic voyager is underlined throughout the trilogy. In Monstre Gai, for example, Lewis edged his description with a note of the mock-epic. Here Pullman is settling in to the Phanuel Hotel, about to embark on a new stage of his experience in Third City. The passage strikes a mixed note of gusto and awareness of danger:

He took down a copy of the Odyssey. 'What more appropriate for the supernatural wanderer?' In the psychological region of Calypso he sank into the pneumatic wonders of his bed; soon, before he had extinguished the light, he had fallen asleep, he was dreaming of treacherous magicians, of smoke, and of unknown skies.<sup>116</sup>

### C: Human Scale and the Power Vacuum

As Pullman moves through Matapolis and the punishment centre Dis, he keeps his personal responses to himself and utters only a few anonymous sounds for the public ear. These stock-taking sounds provide him with an outlet for his "subterranean" human sympathy,<sup>117</sup> as he calls it. When the Bailiff's mother tells Pullman of the work done at Dis he reacts non-committally. "'There are only Us and the Sinners—and you are not Us. See?'" she tells him. No one can escape from Dis, she continues, for the police are very diligent:

'Ah!' declared Pullman. 'Ah!'

'What do you mean, Ah?' the old lady demanded.

'Oh, I meant Hum.'

The old lady burst into shrieks of antinomic merriment.<sup>118</sup>





Again, as Pullman walks along the road between the punishment centre and the sheds where the new batches of sinners arrive, he sees the guards brutally kicking the women prisoners. Occasionally a sinner is officially pardoned, he learns, but no woman ever goes free. "'Ah ha,' was Pullman's non-committal comment." Encouraged, his companion goes on with his description:

'When they reach the place of punishment, all the women are marched out, and all of suitable age are publicly assaulted, by any guard who wishes to. There is a stretch of grass out there just for that purpose. While this is going on a voice shouts into a megaphone, "After this you will go to a surgeon, who will obliterate sex for you." Most of them are marched off to the operating table, from the grass, hot from their last erotic exercise.'

'Ah,' said Pullman. 'Ahum.'<sup>119</sup>

Pullman's steady coolness impresses his guide in the operating rooms and crematorium at Dis. "'My dear fellow, . . .you saw a murder and an execution without turning a hair!'" he exclaims. "'Which was the murder?' Pullman inquired."<sup>120</sup>

In his windowless office, Sammael holds up a copy of Pullman's best-known book. His deeply growling voice announces that Pullman had been a satirist on earth, and Sammael himself is surprised to read that the earth is so iniquitous:

'Is the world so evil. . .and so ignoble?'

Pullman's heart sank: but he sat up quickly, and did his best.

'I fear, sir, that it is. Often I have had that said to me, almost in your words. My answer must always be the same: I did not make the universe: if I had I should have made it differently.'<sup>121</sup>

Pullman, throughout his travels in the Bailiff's Camp and in Third City, had continued his earthly pattern of holding himself above the rest of humanity. His disdain for Satters is an emblem of this haughty spirit. Here in Hell, Pullman begins his rediscovery of humane values. Matapolis, a city of functional efficiency, is governed by a puritanical Devil whose hatred of the human race is the basis not only of his mind, but also of



his nature. His "sullen, frozen city"<sup>122</sup> whose moralistic citizens will not tolerate change, beauty or human appetite, offers nothing for the human spirit.<sup>123</sup> "The centre of Matapolis was not the heart of a city, but an unlively mathematical middle."<sup>124</sup>

Pullman and Satters are caught in a universe of power. Attached to the Bailiff's plump body, they have experienced flight at a rate approaching the speed of light.<sup>125</sup> The fires of Hell have grown progressively hotter since Dante's time, Sammael explains to Pullman; and power has mushroomed. "'Plenty of bonfires were kindled for the wicked, but the fires were not so concentrated as they are today.'"<sup>126</sup> With the aid of physicists, mathematicians, and engineers drawn from the ranks of the sinners, Sammael has extended his technological powers. He has built an atomic barbeque for the final extinction of the prisoners in Dis. In his 'House of Fire' sinners are strapped to an inverted sled that runs on a track suspended from the ceiling. The sled's course dips down to within ten feet of an enormous grill, the fires of which consume the human form:

Down below, as it were in the well of the circus, was a fiery grill, circular in shape, about forty-five yards in diameter. Red hot, crackling forms, assembled like the figures in an abstract painting, was all one saw, but this gigantic grill was made possible by furnaces underneath. The stoking of these (which Pullman felt he could dimly hear) must have been an almost superhuman task.<sup>127</sup>

Pullman feels nauseous at the thought of a sinner's being "shrivelled up, like a piece of scorched bread"<sup>128</sup> in the heat of this atomic fire. The image is echoed when Pullman takes lunch with the Devil and is offered Toast Melba by a whiskered English butler. As Sammael and he break the "curling cauterized bread" together, they discuss the origin of the name:

'It must have been the French who liked her curling bosom, and set the wave rolling down the ages.' Pullman laughed.

'How long will it continue to roll?' asked Sammael.



'As long as there are English butlers in Hell,' replied Pullman, looking at his compatriot.

'Ah yes. All things end in the whiskers of a functionary,' Sammael intoned.

Here, where Pullman shares a bit of the scorched and heat-blasted staff of life with the Lord Sammael, he has reached the heart of nothingness.<sup>129</sup> In Sammael's house of institutionalized destruction of the human form, Pullman is forced to see Sammael's total inhumanity. "In so large a place, curious mechanical accessories of this atrocious kind emasculated the horror: the darkened atmosphere, the absence of sound (no cry came from the victim) gave it much more the effect of an operation than of an execution. A very odd, upside-down operation."<sup>130</sup> Pullman's guide through this tour of the punishment centre is a Doctor Hachilah, whose "warm, commercial smile" directed at humanity, Pullman finds reassuring.<sup>131</sup>

#### D: Revaluation

In Hell Pullman duplicates the practice he had established in each stage of his life. On earth he had accepted the patronage of anyone with power, just to get his works published and publicized. In the death-camp in The Childermass he swung toward the Bailiff, whom he saw as an amusing and energetic spirit. In Third City, Pullman found rationalizations to justify turning again to the Bailiff.<sup>132</sup> Here in Matapolis, Pullman joins Sammael in a scheme to merge the dark angels with mankind. At each stage, Pullman had paradoxically allied himself with an agent inimical to the genius of the human spirit. Now again, Pullman actively assists the Devil in making divinity irrelevant to man. Sammael's plan is parallel with the Bailiff's scheme of estranging the white angels from mankind by isolating them from contact with humanity. Like the Bailiff in The Childermass, Sammael recognizes the pragmatic





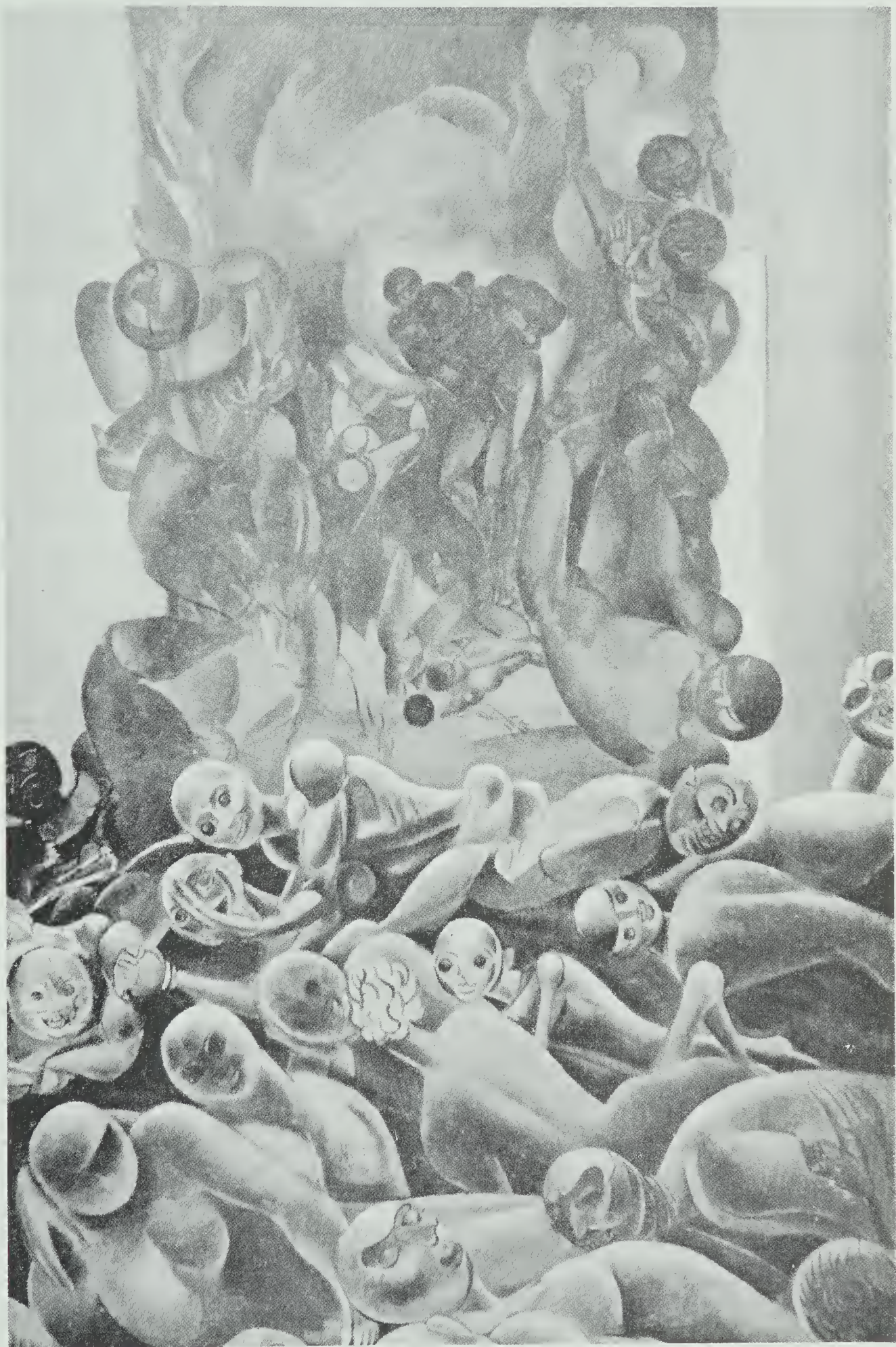


Plate 10





necessity of harnessing some of mankind's new technological powers. He has had to revise his original disdain for man born of woman — in the face of new developments:

'It seems to me that Man is on the eve of modifying his existence. To take only that, he will soon be living much longer: and in extending his life's span in that way, he would necessarily be making profound changes . . . . In the end, in intellect and other things, he might outstrip the angels. . . .'133

Pullman accepts Sammael's assessment of human power. Pursuing his pattern of earthly life, and supported by Sammael's hatred of mankind, Pullman rates human value very low.

With the aid of Dr. Schlank, a portly physicist, and a group of intellectuals collected in Haus Europa, Sammael has begun to exploit a new source of power. He is working out plans to create the 'nucleus' of an army from his police force and a 'nucleus' of intelligent society to be developed by the functionaries of Haus Europa.<sup>134</sup> It is clear throughout that Sammael's greatest powers are all destructive. As he confides to Pullman, "'For the past week a quite unexpected, unheralded food problem demanded my attention. Farming is not a subject I am very good at. I labour to understand, but agricultural troubles take me twice as long as any others to get to the bottom of.'"135

Sammael also indicates that power such as his can never be completely controlled. One day he takes Pullman out for a short ride in the country. "The mad Puritan," Sammael was personally delivering a pretty Frenchwoman to be savaged by a herd of wild animals, one quarter man and three-quarters goat. "'It took a long time to interbreed them up to their present perfection of beastliness,'" Sammael tells Pullman.<sup>136</sup>

While the woman appeals to Pullman for help, Sammael denies her any pity and tosses her out to the lubricious beasts stampeding around the limousine:



There burst into the car the fearful stench, there was a scarlet flash of sexual monstrosity, the whining and snorting of a score of faces--the beasts leaping on one another's backs, so that several appeared to be about to spring on to the roof of the car. -- Scores of sinewy arms terminating in claws shot into the car, and snatched the woman out of it.

There was her body, shoulder-high, for the fraction of a second, in the midst of the stinking pack--the sickening odour increased in intensity. Just for that fractional speck of time a dozen claws could be seen defiling her person.<sup>137</sup>

The car speeds away, and Sammael describes a mass execution of female sinners staged in a large cave. He had had it lit with electricity and had stationed about two hundred of the goat-men at its entrance. Plenty of troops were also on hand, machine guns trained on the mouth of the cave. He describes to Pullman the screams of the women and their "universal whining" and later the "eating and guzzling sounds" made by their devourers:

'I have a recording of it, a number of discs. If you like, I will let you hear it.'

'I wish you would,' Pullman said firmly.

'It is difficult,' Sammael observed, 'to describe the sound made by animals. What they do is much more impressive than what they say.'<sup>138</sup>

As the car turns back on the road, Pullman sees the animals on top of the raw and bleeding body of the Frenchwoman: and then he becomes aware of a sleepy goatish profile looking in at him. "The disgusting urbanity of the face, the blood colouring the line of the mouth, and reaching, here and there, as far as the eye, its patient smiling restraint, as the animal ambled along beside the car, was politely expressive. 'Any more?' it inquired, as it slid its eye sleepily into the car."<sup>139</sup>

Sammael terminates this excursion into the country with a confession that even specially bred agents of punishment like this one are getting out of his control. "'If not discouraged,' he tells Pullman, 'those beasts will sometimes gallop along with one as far as the city--that one would have been waiting, smiling, as I got out of the car at the



hospital. . . . On one occasion a band of them trotted up to the buildings over there, and, seeing a young woman doctor, they seized her and carried her off."<sup>140</sup>

In the face of these enormous powers, the human perspective is drawn very finely. "To have his body, however metaphysical it might be, reduced to an almost invisible existence, and then, like the magic of the mango tree, expanded precipitously to the size of the standard humanity, did not leave [Pullman's] reason unimpaired."<sup>141</sup> Since his escape to Third City, Pullman has sensed his own fragility in the presence of supernatural capacities. In Third City an angel of light and an angel of darkness suddenly exploded from the human dimension to their normal gigantic stature, and, leaving their miniature shoes behind, they shot out of sight in an epic battle:

Hell's messenger protruded against the azure sky an anchovy-coloured balloon. But this was immediately succeeded by an upsurge of pink limbs, of enormous size, climbing on top of the darker element; and that is how they actually vanished behind the roof, a picture in pink, wine-brown, and azure, the last things seen being three or four violently agitated feet, pink feet and brown feet, the stiff tumbling spikes of twenty toes signalling the action beneath.<sup>142</sup>

Although the space allotted to Hell does not allow for preservation of all the sinners' bodies until the Last Judgement, a gigantic filing system has been devised as a surrogate.<sup>143</sup> In Dis, there are no metaphysical problems connected with the business of punishing human sin; they reduce to a technical question of waste disposal.

Sammael is a school-master dominie figure on a demonic scale. He has assembled his men of parts in Haus Europa as the "nucleus. . . of a university."<sup>144</sup> It is here that the angelic aristocrats of the new Human Age are to be trained. Pullman begins his programme of instruction by inviting two angels to Haus Europa. Here he has his first opportunity





of examining the faces he is to stamp with human patterns:

The extreme disparity of the angel life in contrast to the human life, was responsible for shaping all the expression-making lineaments in a surprisingly different way. A man who marries and is given in marriage, who buys and sells — who calls his home his castle, all that kind of thing, directs the formation of the face, and is responsible for the expression it assumes. . . . It was the absence of all that would normally facilitate such an identification that was so startling about these supernatural men. These were the faces of children who had never lived with men and women — but who had lived in the clouds, since the world began. It was when they quickly looked up, after their minds had been elsewhere, that one detected the tremendous innocence.<sup>145</sup>

In all this concentration of Sammael's power and will, culminating in the Black Angel Kermess and a threat from Heaven, the human identity is at stake. Unmixed, the human is not assimilable into Sammael's universe of force. The medical technicians in Dis are kept busy trying to arrest the natural healing process of their victims, "keeping the wounds fresh"<sup>146</sup> for the duration of their experiments. Again, many experiments terminate abruptly when the patients simply die. "'It is amazing how easy men are to kill,'" the Bailiff's mother gossips to Pullman. "'In punishment cells, you turn around and find that the man or woman is dead.'"<sup>147</sup> The hair, skin, nails, and teeth of the sinners are all material resources for life in Matapolis, but there are signs that the human commodity impinges on its consumers. As a citizen conducts Pullman on a tour of Matapolis, he points out packets of black hair:

'There. . . that is probably an Italian's crop. It is very useful for pincushions, or for padding of clothes, although these short, strong hairs are apt to get adrift, on one of the cheaper suits, and give you a bad prick.'

'Indeed?' Pullman showed a curious interest.

'Oh yes,' said Mark. 'I have had a stiff black hair like that come through the lining of the jacket and prick me below the armpit.'

'Ha!' said Pullman.<sup>148</sup>

The hair-shirt worn by this Matapolitan is an ironic emblem both of his mastery and of his penitence. In conjunction with Sammael's atomic grill



and medical laboratories, it connects Matapolis with the lampshades, gas ovens and concentration camps of Hitler's Third Reich.

### E: Fiesta

Pullman proposes the final test of Sammael's new education programme. He plans to expose the angels to the company of women as a test of their enthusiasm for the projected evolution into mortality. The most handsome female sinners have been collected and sent to charm school, while the angels browsed through copies of Esquire left lying about in their public reading rooms.<sup>149</sup> On Fiesta Day dance bands play tangos and rhumbas while the Devil's troupe of costumed women move among the angels.<sup>150</sup> At a Gala Lunch, Sammael himself appears at the side of his beautiful 'fiancée,' a tall octroon in silver lamé.<sup>151</sup> The climax of the Fiesta is an Angel Kermess at half-past midnight on Angelway. Sammael's angels gather in gangs, many of them drunk and disorderly. Women, "looking particularly small and precarious,"<sup>152</sup> among these dark giants, are seduced and raped in the streets. There are lynchings of unpopular angels as the night of Fiesta wears on, and rival gangs of bullies start up street fights. The angels succumb to Sammael's temptations, and a warning arrives from Heaven:

It warned the lord Sammael not to proceed with his plans to close down Hades. Secondly, it reproached him, with the utmost severity, for the humanization of the angel population.

'This is, up to date, your greatest sin.'<sup>153</sup>

In a moment's reflection at the Fiesta, Pullman looks at the handsome dominant figure of Sammael and finds in him only a false and negative force. Like the Bailiff, Sammael has only hatred as a mode of creativity.<sup>154</sup> The eugenic model for his new race might be the Bailiff himself,<sup>155</sup> with his supernatural powers welded onto human greed and



irresponsibility:

This was merely a defiance of God. In Sammael's heart there was no great purpose, but the old, cold pride. He was resolved to explode the supernatural, ultimately to make an end of God. . . . He was now arranging for the contamination of the angel nature--for the destruction of something which had endured since the beginning of time. He was going to mix it up with the pettiness and corruption of mankind. He had built for it, in Angeltown, a sort of comic Hollywood.<sup>156</sup>

Pullman's experience in Matapolis has forced him to make a re-evaluation of his own position as a human in relation to divine authority. He has looked at the fleshy red face of Satters as a potato, "which had been kneaded and scraped" into the form of humanity. "And Pullman mournfully studied this semi-human creature which was forever attached to him--though he realized that he himself was merely another kind of rather superior potato."<sup>157</sup> In his supplication to God, Pullman prays for mercy and insists that Satters "had in no way shared in his sinfulness, indeed he was so simple that he was incapable of sin."<sup>158</sup> From the time of his first flight into Third City, Pullman has acknowledged his frailty. "'We are probably somewhere between the Pole Star and the Sun,'" he observed facing into the vast space above him. "'My spine feels as though it were about to melt.'" The thought of Pullman "melting like a man of wax" terrified Satters.<sup>159</sup> Increasingly, Pullman comes to see himself as an Icarus, or as a fox who has out-foxed himself. As he approaches the House of Fire, he feels feeble, and indeed drooping, "worn out and wanting in that manly will which constituted him a Homeric figure in the eyes of Satters."<sup>160</sup>

With his repudiation of demonic power and his own reintegration of himself into the human scale of values, Pullman has set his house in order. He realizes that hoping to "save his skin," he had been assisting at the annihilation of the divine;<sup>161</sup> and he had adapted himself to





Sammael's world. But in Dis, he learned that his skin meant nothing without the divine:

God values man: that is the important thing to remember. It is this valuing that is so extraordinary. There are men who only value power. This is absurd, because power destroys value. Value can only exist with multiplicity. The only value for Sammael is solipsistic. I, Pullman, am acting in a valueless vacuum called Sammael. He looked at his apartment. It was a momentary resting place in a vacuum.<sup>162</sup>

As a satirist, Pullman has learned that man is only corrigible if he is valued and preserved, rather than hated and destroyed. Lewis had written in The Art of Being Ruled that the chronic dissatisfaction of the scientific or philosophic mind with the mental capacities of ordinary humanity was being vulgarized by the schoolmaster figure. The hatred of stupidity of the dominie, which Lewis called his "vulgarization of disgust," could only lead to a deadening of the sensibility.<sup>163</sup> Satire, Lewis wrote, could be "an anti-toxin of the first order." It need not be narrowly moralistic or normative, for, in a society of Sinners, either everyone should be destroyed (as in Dis) or no one:

It is my belief that in fact even Satire for its own sake—as much as anything else for its own sake—is possible: and that even the most virtuous and well-proportioned of men is only a shadow, after all, of some perfection; a shadow of an imperfect, and hence an 'ugly' sort. And, as to laughter, if you allow it in one place you must, I think, allow it in another. Laughter—humour and wit—has a function similar to that of art. It is the preserver much more than the destroyer.<sup>164</sup>

As the Black and the White Angels battle over Matapolis, Pullman is lifted by two White Angels. "There was a harsh whisper in his ear. 'No harm will come to you,'" His nostrils filled with the smell of leather and polished brass, Pullman is swept from the room. His telephone begins ringing insistently, and he imagines his servant answering, "'Mr. Pullman is being carried away by two of God's soldiers.'"<sup>165</sup>



## CHAPTER FIVE

### ZERO AND THE MACHINE

In this final section of my analysis of Wyndham Lewis's satire I review some of Lewis's modes of examining man's extensions of his power and will. Modern developments in genetics give mankind in the Twentieth Century the power to alter its own evolution. The electric technologies of communication and the science of cybernetics alter human perception and modes of expression. Lewis probed the significance of some of these potentialities in his studies of contemporary western culture. In his satire he exposed the deadness at the core of specious revolution, and he explored the potential benefits and dangers of genuine revolutionary change. Both in his paintings and in his writing, Lewis projected potential human transformations in order to cushion the sensibility against culture shock.

Finally, I examine the figure of Augustine Card in the last novel Lewis published, The Red Priest. Lewis embodied in the figure of Card the apocalyptic extreme of the power impulse in man. Lewis had anticipated the destructive force of nuclear power as early as in the writing of The Childermass, in 1928. With Monstre Gai and Malign Fiesta Lewis's analysis became more detailed and his prophecy more insistently dark. In The Red Priest, the atom bomb marked the end point of a logical progression through a series of destructive modes of machine-expression.

To coexist with the spectre of this final blast, Lewis created symbols of the eternal life cycle of new growth. The Red Priest, like Malign Fiesta, offers society a choice of directions.



Part I: The Machinery of Transformation

As Pullman and Satters explored the elastic environment of the Bailiff's Camp in The Childermass, they oscillated wildly through a series of transformations. At one stage Pullman pulled his weighty charge along a stretch of cinder footpath until Satters suddenly shied at the appearance of the peons:

There is a sudden hissing like that of cats or geese. With a noisy intake of breath Satters halts, pulverizing the cindery track as he pulls up with the reversed iron-horseshoes of his heels.<sup>1</sup>

In this passage, the human Satters, the animal horse, and the mechanical 'iron-horse' or train coalesced metaphorically. In the Bailiff's Camp the normal time and space coordinates were deranged. "New worlds for old -- all is in the melting pot."<sup>2</sup> Satters and Pullman tried on a variety of modes of existence -- schoolmaster, baby, governess, train, ship, camera and gun -- in an effort to adapt to alien conditions.

The problem of survival in a period of accelerated technological change engaged Lewis's attention through most of his work. Fundamentally, he explored the potentialities, good and bad, of man's relationship with his machines. Humanity might either be radically transformed and improved by assimilation of the machine, or be destroyed by it. In introducing the first part of his The Art of Being Ruled, titled "Revolution and Progress," Lewis quoted a passage from Samuel Butler's Notebooks:

. . . were it not for this constant change in our physical powers, which our mechanical limits have brought about, man would have long since apparently attained his limit of possibility; he would be a creature of as much fixity as the ants and bees. . . . If there were a race of men without any mechanical appliances we should see this clearly.

As a final introductory comment on the substance of his argument in The Art of Being Ruled, Lewis cited a remark from Irving Babbitt's Democracy and Leadership: "Man is, either in the good or bad sense, the infinite





animal."<sup>3</sup>

The machine, developing through a swift technological evolution, provided the pattern for accelerated human change:

It is because our lives are so attached to and involved with the evolution of our machines that we have grown to see and feel everything in revolutionary terms, just as once the natural mood was conservative. We instinctively repose on the future rather than the past, though this may not yet be generally realized. Instead of the static circle of the rotation of crops, or the infinite slow progress of handiwork, we are in the midst of the frenzied evolutionary war of the machines. This affects our view of everything; our life, its objects and uses, love, health, friendship, politics: even art to a certain extent, but with much less conviction.<sup>4</sup>

Lewis wrote of the potential usefulness of the "technical dissolvent" which might augment philosophy and religion in their criticism of life, and thereby save humanity from a sad stagnation. "To be able at last to have a technique that enables men to regard life itself as something imperfect, like a machine to be superseded, should far outweigh any temporary inconveniences, or even murderous absentmindedness, of science."<sup>5</sup>

The phrase "murderous absentmindedness" of science points up the complexity of Lewis's argument here. He was aware of the potential improvement and attendant dangers of revolutionary science and politics. During the time it would take for the wave of change to make its transit around the world and to be assimilated into the whole human culture, "animal conditions, practically, must prevail."

To treat of permanent values and metaphysical truths is the natural useful task of a small number of men, and one chaos is much like another to them. If they take illustrations from chaos and destruction for the things they believe never are destroyed, that is natural enough, for that is all the landscape provides. Then there are two kinds of revolution: there is permanent revolution, and there is an impermanent, spurious, utilitarian variety. Much 'revolutionary' matter today is a mushroom sort, not at all edible or meant for sustenance. There is creative revolution, to parody Bergson's term, and destructive revolution. A sorting out or analysis is necessary to protect as many people as have the sense to heed these nuances. A great deal of the experimental





material of art and science, for instance, is independent of any destructive function. Revolutionary malice or stupidity generally confuses it with the useful but not very savoury chemistry of the Apocalypse.<sup>6</sup>

Lewis undertook a sorting out or analysis of the forces at work in his own transitional society. He wrote in The Lion and the Fox that European history at the time of Machiavelli and Shakespeare was a chronicle of transition. "The abrupt translation of an entire society from one set of values to another, from the values of the feudal commune to the more generous and elastic conditions of the modern state, from a mystical view of the world to a 'realistic' one, is responsible for all the monsters and angels produced by the renaissance. A sphinx, from one point of view, was the result of this release of vitality in all directions."<sup>7</sup> The Twentieth Century, when the Newtonian mechanics were yielding to relativity physics, would produce its own race of monsters and angels. In the Newtonian world, "a musical ride of the spheres (with music by Kepler) is in progress. In. . .the system of the Relativity theory, to a complex geodesic frame of flowering events each man contributes his widow's mite of necessary reality."<sup>8</sup> In Monstre Gai Lewis demonstrated his concern for the long-range effects of radiation. The genetic disruptions caused by radiation compounded the evolutionary transformations of monsters and angels.

In Lewis's view, it was the function of the artist and critic of society to chart these developments of science and to observe their offshoots in human society. Political revolution, like revolutionary science, was endemic in the modern period, and the intelligent observer was responsible for forging a language and system of ideas to accommodate it. An active intelligence would function like a "theoretic watchdog"<sup>9</sup> constantly aware of developments through the revolutionary process:



[Revolution] is, also certain to become a universal religion of sorts. These characteristics of its start will no doubt give place to a more noble and prepossessing imagery: since in William Blake's language, "The rat, the mouse, the fox, the rabbits watch the roots": the more magnificent quadrupeds enjoy the fruits. Revolution is still to some extent subterranean; hence we live, as yet, somewhat in a world of rats and foxes. Lenin was, however, a Lion, and consequently a portion of eternity too great for the eye of man to measure.<sup>10</sup>

In a series of short essays published just after the First World War Lewis had discussed the challenge of securing a resilient and responsive language of forms for the expression of new experience in machine technology:

As already man's body in no way indicates the scope of his personal existence (as the bear's or the spider's indicates theirs) it cannot any more in pictorial art be used as his effective expression. . . . .

There is in the inorganic world an organism that is his: and which, as much as his partially superseded body, is in a position of mastery and of higher significance over the cheese, the coal-scuttle, or the plate of Provençal apples.<sup>11</sup>

The Childermass catalogues a variety of human transformations brought about by electric technology. I should like in addition, as my concluding commentary, to canvas some of Lewis's other novels in examining the effects of the machine on human sensibility. In his first collection of short stories, written in 1919, Lewis defined the nature of his comic creations. "We have in most lives the spectacle of a pattern as circumscribed and as complete as a theorem of Euclid. So these are essays in a new human mathematic. But they are, each of them, simple shapes, little monuments of logic." The human being living on its most functional level is a simple machine. It is when it grows self-conscious and begins to exercise its intelligence and will that it begins to act as a person. This escape from simple functionalism is a leap into comic or tragic awareness. "Laughter is the representative of tragedy, when tragedy is away," Lewis continues in The Wild Body.<sup>12</sup>

A figure from Lewis's 1937 novel of the Spanish Civil War The



Revenge for Love manifests this machine-like existence of the physically-functional human being. The peasant girl Josepha de la Asunción has the dumb mechanical eloquence of simple humanity. Her movements and responses are those of raw natural man, before he has been schooled by the agents of political abstraction:

She was walking very slowly: she was walking with the orthodox majesty of the women of those districts — their skulls flattened with heavy pitchers—with a hieratic hip-roll that bore her away. . . .<sup>13</sup>

Her eyes still stared, with their hypnotic animal gaze. And now like a sleepwalker the girl wheeled in front of him, as if in ceremonial dumbshow; and the great clockwork hips, setting up their sleepy swaying, in a stately slowtime march bore her out of the hall. Don Alvaro. . . felt he could trust this instrument, upon which he had played—como no!—as a master, and dismissed it of its fatal tasks full of the awful music of his deep implacable voice, to subdue it to his will.<sup>14</sup>

The novel too provides examples of a brutal and tragic transformation of the human animal into the abstract machine of political destructiveness. Sean O'Hara is introduced into the novel barking orders into a telephone while his wife tosses bread to sparrows dipping down past their balcony:

The telephone bell rang upon the table at his side, and the sparrows decamped as if at a take-cover fiat. Sean O'Hara lifted the receiver and said "Yes!" He said it faintly and coldly, and listened to the voice bawling at him out of the néant, that had began to clapper away in it, rather as an intelligent man picks up a newspaper and addresses himself to the absorption of the thick dope that is poured out, in the orderly ducts of its political columns — endeavouring, perhaps, to discover (if it is his business to understand such things) what motive the words conceal: not at all what facts, of course, it has been sought to convey, but what facts it has been intended to reduce to a deliquium.

O'Hara's speech is conditioned to the telephone; he spits out stocatto responses before cutting off all contact with an abrupt slam of the receiver.<sup>15</sup>

Sean O'Hara is an enemy of natural life who relentlessly exploits its vulnerability to destructive technology. Here, in the context of the Spanish Civil War, his mind functions symbolically like the bombar-





dier's button loosing waves of fire on Spanish towns:

Had he [Sean O'Hara] been with Harold Hardrada in Sicily it would have been his brain that would have dispatched the Varangian fowlers to catch the small birds that flew out of the besieged town every day to the forests, and to attach smouldering wax vestas to their legs, that they might fire the thatches where they nested, and so smoke out the obstinate inhabitants. The malice of his bitterness against man—the ready access of his outcast mind to the planes upon which small creatures have their being—would have led him to this device, and given him the standing of a magician.<sup>16</sup>

The name of another character of the novel, Hardcaster, is an index of the process of political abstraction that produces a new kind of machine. That machine in turn produces others like itself in the course of its contact with malleable people. Here one character speculates on the meaning of the name:

He was wondering if he'd heard the name aright and if it really was Hard Caster. That must be communist for something. He heard someone else say it, and he heard it again. It certainly sounded like Hard Caster.<sup>17</sup>

The use of cast and hard are part of Lewis's exploration of the effect of deliberate masking on the relations between people in the novel. In his descriptions of the encounter between Percy and Gillian, he indicates the impersonality of individuals who have created hard-surfaced abstractions out of themselves.

Percy looked at her fixedly, through a long, constipated and angry silence. Always collected and cool, however flushed his volatile cuticle, this shell of the rational man a considerable strain put on it, as Percy gazed as if interrogating a well-connected sphinx—the rough side of whose tongue it had been his lot to attract to himself.<sup>18</sup>

The Revenge for Love also demonstrates the comic transformation of a person into a machine. In the figure of Agnes Irons, 'that hardened old Philistine' and open golf champion of the Straits Settlement, Lewis depicts the busy dynamics of the locomotive. Agnes Irons's brazen gusto and deafening laughter intrude into the delicate bird-world of Margot. For Margot, she is the embodiment of mechanical culture shock.



"Agnes moved hither and thither, in massive attitudes of overwhelming competence. And to see her prepare the tea was something like witnessing Jove's thunderbolt brought down from heaven to brain a gnat."<sup>19</sup> Her incapacity for a life lived at a greater level of consciousness than that of hearty sports marks her as a figure of high comedy. When she breaks off from her constant discharge of guffaws, and tries to communicate on a humane level with Margot, she cannot find words. "So Agnes became rather suddenly deflated. A somewhat careworn shell a little alarmingly took the place of the 'dynamic' personality. The young veteran of the links -- whose nickel-plated trophies stood in a row upon the mantelpiece -- showed for a moment the strain of the White Man's Burden and of ten thousand rounds of golf."<sup>20</sup>

As Lewis perceived, few of the transformations of humanity achieved by machine technology had produced a real and viable new kind of creation. In the foreword to The Doom of Youth, published in 1932, he described the pseudo "New European," offshoot of decades of revolutionary science, as "a sort of half-man -- or child-man, or a sort of rag doll, more and more -- composed of the bits left over, oddly arranged."<sup>21</sup> Vincent Penhale perceived the emptiness of the new machine-men thrown up by western culture. "'Our epoch finds its highest expression in those dynamical puppets.'"<sup>22</sup> These failures of creativity seem to repudiate the vision of a human future Lewis expressed in his 1919 essay The Caliph's Design. Man was able, he had written, to enjoy his consciousness in probing all forms of life and to "employ all modes and processes"<sup>23</sup> for his evolution:

We know that all intellectual effort indicates a desire to perfect and to continue to create; to order, regulate, disinfect and stabilize our life. What I am proposing is activity, more deliberate and more intense, upon the material we know and upon our present very fallible stock.



. . . . Let us everywhere substitute ourselves for the animal world, replace the tiger and the cormorant with some invention of our mind, so that we can control this new Creation. The danger, as it would appear at present, and in our first flight of substitution and remounting, is evidently that we should become overpowered by our creation. Our society might become as mechanical as a tremendous insect.<sup>24</sup>

Lewis saw in the nuclear forces harnessed by the Americans under the pressure of World War II the possibility of a radical transformation not only of power, but of human attitudes towards its use. His re-vitalized, although restrained optimism was as he wrote in 1950, "a by-product of atomic energy." One could anticipate in the future that one or another great world power would use atomic weapons. But then the experience of this vast destruction would alter men's thinking:

In spite of the hearty 'business as usual' attitude — and a very firm hand with those who suggest that there is anything odd or screwy about it all: for all the 'I-can-take-it' bursting gamely from blue and swollen lips, and the 'brave smiles' fading only upon mortification on the faces of the cheerful radioactive dead — for all the well-known capacity to 'keep smiling' long after there was any conceivable thing to smile about — a miracle would happen. An idea would steal apologetically into the minds of a number of those still sound in wind and limb whose intellectual apparatus (though sluggish and clogged with slogans and soggy uplift) still functioned.<sup>25</sup>

Lewis imagined in America the matrix of future development. "The background against which America must be viewed is the future," he wrote in America and Cosmic Man. "It can only be seen in its true light against something that is not there. It is what in the fullness of time it must become. . . that is its real background: and in all its cultural procedure that is implicit."<sup>26</sup> In the enormously speeded-up time scale of the atomic age traditional systems of political and economic control had become obsolete. "Human societies are engaged in a perpetual struggle to disengage themselves from a chaos of super-annuated laws," he wrote;<sup>27</sup> and in the melting pot of the New World these societies might break free: Is it surprising that occasionally in the air one thinks that one detects something so far not met with; the electric intoxication of the air





breathed by prisoners set free? The American air is conditioned by these immigrant multitudes, hollow with the great ouf! with which they have turned their back upon the European world.

(I ought, perhaps, to say our America, at the opening of what has been called the 'Atomic age', is not any longer across the seas. Instead, it is a time, not a place: namely, the cosmic era which lies beyond the ruin and disintegration of atomic war.)<sup>28</sup>

At a time when the threat of atomic power might reduce human irresponsibility in war to an absurdity, Lewis envisioned a new human order. "At this time I am perhaps culturally --politically -- a little where I was in 'The Caliph's Design.' I perceive as it were a white and shining city, a preposterous Baghdad, in place of the contemporary ruins, social and architectural, of 1947."<sup>29</sup>

Lewis explored the horrors of nuclear war in the storms and their continuing psychological and physical devastation of Third City in Monstre Gai. Throughout the trilogy, he was probing the superannuation of human physical power. The peons in The Childermass were all thumbs and were slowly moving off the scene in coffin-like human boxcars. The workers' hands at the Bailiff's Tribunal are manacled and useless. The theme is continued in Third City and in Matapolis. When the Padishah besieges the Bailiff's Palace, Pullman and Satters cringe before the huge horny ridge of angel fingernail and flesh that fills their room.<sup>30</sup> The angelic and demonic scale dwarfs the human. "'When my natural size,' the lord Sammael smilingly explained, 'my hand is so enormous that I could pick up a half-dozen cars like this.'"<sup>31</sup> The Bailiff recounts to Pullman an incident in which Sammael had cured a Lieutenant-Governor's conceit by having all his fingers cut off at the knuckle:

'You see, Pullman, he looks at men and their fingers in a very different way from you. He has a poor appreciation of the material you would say. His heart is of gold, but it is so large.'

'And a finger so small, is that what you mean?'<sup>32</sup>



At best, in these worlds of tyrannic power, the human finger becomes a blind for an electronic eaves dropping device<sup>33</sup> or, metaphorically, an extension of demonic will. At the height of preparations for the Fiesta, the Bailiff blusters his congratulations to Pullman. "'Why Pullman, you limb of the Devil, I see your finger everywhere!'"<sup>34</sup> A "bejewelled claw" bursts out from the black cerements concealing the body of the Bailiff's mother,<sup>35</sup> and the Bailiff himself extends his power through the telephone and microphone.<sup>36</sup>

Pushed into an extreme situation in an alien environment, Pullman can do no more than fold his hands in his impotence, then later put his hand over Satters's for mutual comfort.<sup>37</sup> As the White Angels come to take Pullman away, his hands are in an attitude of prayer. Satters, whose last days were spent tending the Japanese peony, symbol of happiness and fertility, is left gouging out of the earth a shelter for survival:

Now rushing giants were everywhere. He flung himself recklessly into a pit where the earth had been dug up; it was dry and crumbly earth, and, his two hands scratching wildly, he hollowed out for himself a hole to hide in.<sup>38</sup>

Sammael's dark angels, with help from human technology, have become terrific conglomerates of power. They have ganged up in "living wheels" and "chains" of drunken force.<sup>39</sup> The serpent which the Bailiff bore into Third City on his banner now reasserts its presence with murders in the streets of Angeltown:

The vast street was empty, except for a vulture circling around where the corpse was. He may have been suspicious of the shining handle of the dagger, sculptured to represent a serpent rampant.<sup>40</sup>



Part II: The Red Priest

In an essay "The Objective of Art in Our Time," Lewis wrote that in his art man is daily probing the possibilities of assimilation with the machine. "Some adjustment, then, between the approach of a conscious being to that mechanical perfection, and the fact of his mechanical incompetence (since mechanical perfection will not tally with the human thing) is the situation that produces art." It is a game we are playing in this aesthetic relation between material functionalism and our own "bacillus-ridden, terribly exposed pied-a-terre." This game consists in "seeing how near you can get, without the sudden extinction and neutralization that awaits you as matter, or as the machine."<sup>41</sup> In Lewis's last published novel, the Red Priest Augustine Card counterfeits the machine with an insane fixity that extinguishes his own humanity.

The name Card recalls the theme of falsity in The Vulgar Streak. Father Card's initials A.C. suggest his pulsating energy and attractiveness. He is, one priest confides, "so magnetic as to supply all the people with whom he comes in contact with a galvanic shock."<sup>42</sup> Father Card had been a Boxing Blue at Oxford, and he retains a Stone-Age primitivism in every part of his conduct of life. As he goes calling in his parish of St. Catherine of the Angels, Father Card is like a projectile, "his powerful body sheathed in a cassock, balancing as it seemed his biretta on the crest of his forehead."<sup>43</sup>

"I have been doing no fighting since I became a skypilot,"<sup>44</sup> he confides in a friend. But for Card, the experience of God is a violent and terrifying reality. "I met Him at the corner of a street - He entered my mind with a bang, and nearly burst my head open."<sup>45</sup> Card plans to infect his congregation with an enthusiasm for this bullet-like



God and ultimately "'to march with Jesus into Whitehall.'"46 For him the church and its people are the instruments of his will-to-power:

'I know where power is, and power is where I must be. It is no longer a matter of waving a red flag with a schoolboy fierceness, but the necessity of getting. . .near enough to the Black Throne to get a little straight news from the other side of Nowhere.'47

Father Card, with his forehead "ploughed up into a perpetual enquiry," is a caricature of the existentialist writers and philosophers whose literature of extreme situation Lewis called 'escape into action' and 'Twentieth-Century Nihilism.'48 As Father Card moves like a great black bomb through the community, this furrowed brow threatens to push off its covering biretta.49

Card wants to recreate in his west-end London parish the sort of total involvement felt by the early Christians in the days of martyrdom by the Romans. He finds another analogue to this 'pressure of history'50 in the passionate life of post-revolutionary Russia.51 In this artificially-induced atmosphere of crisis Card will mass his believers under him:

'This will seem to some of you a crowd experience, and not a direct enough contact, as it were, with God. But this I cannot go into at present. I just want to say that the presence — the pressure together — of a number of emotionally sympathetic believers, as one still finds in a Catholic society, is a very, good way of beginning to understand this Faith. . . .'

. . . . .  
'We can train individuals to abase themselves before a Power which is so overwhelmingly great that they learn to think of themselves as a fly, or some small insect. . . . . As an experiment, try to see how small you can feel. It is impossible to feel too tiny. You want to feel the ultimate thing to nothingness — to zero.'52

Father Card mesmerizes the insects of his congregation who already abase themselves before his power. As he speaks, "the image of the violent Christ"53 rises in the air and dominates the congregation. First one by one, and then in a knot, Card's admirers stand and pledge to follow the





Red Priest wherever he leads. He knocks down every obstacle and beats Father Makepeace to death in a quarrel over Church policy: "'The rejuvenation of my Church hid what I meant to be dynamite,' he explains. 'Jesus was a stick of dynamite. That man struck me in the face — me! He must have been mad. He did not know I held in my hand the bomb of Jesus!'"<sup>54</sup>

Father Card's public face of unremitting enquiry and juvenile puzzlement<sup>55</sup> connect him with the spurious air of incomprehension on the face of a Sartrean figure jammed up against the 'pressure of history.' In this situation of forced crisis, Lewis wrote, "the hot and passionate immediacy of the crudeness of living would be there; and all its blindness too. Of this blindness Sartre makes a great deal: of the beauty of not understanding what is happening to one. Not only helplessness, but non-comprehension, is somehow an asset."<sup>56</sup> Card's fretful forehead, "the colour of fresh raw beef"<sup>57</sup> and his distracted air are metamorphosed when he goes into action:

Immediately Father Card came to life. The 'sleepwalking thinker,' as he had been described by someone, awoke. The thrusting forward of the heavily wrinkled brow, as if sleepily, almost stupidly, searching for something, was transformed — so much so that Mary Chillingham wondered if the customary mask was, in fact, a carefully considered pose.<sup>58</sup>

The phrase 'sleepwalking thinker,' in conjunction with Card's power complex and mesmeric control over his followers, connects him with the Hitler figure in The Vulgar Streak.

As part of his rejuvenation of the Church, Card stages costly public religious dramas, and he begs his wife continually for "enough money to attract Gielgud in the part of John the Baptist."<sup>59</sup> Soon the whole neighbourhood of St. Catherine of the Angels comes to be described as 'Our London Oberammergau' in the press:



A nativity play was performed in the church, and amid great excitement Christ was born. At the Feast of the Childermass the parents of Christ could be seen escaping on a donkey, Mary riding and Joseph on foot. Herod's soldiers appeared, and discovered that the birds had flown. The neighbourhood was in an uproar half the time with the excitements of Bible history.<sup>60</sup>

Card constantly badgers his wife to finance these public 'spectaculars.' In his greed, he asks her to spend not only her income from an inheritance, but the capital as well. The legacy came from an aunt, who had made her fortune in taxfree Kenya,<sup>61</sup> and who providently preserved it from what Card calls "the fangs of the Welfare State."<sup>62</sup> Given his head, Father Card would now devour it all in his dynamic church revolution.

Card's murder of Father Makepeace terminates his revolution at St. Catherine's. He is tried and found guilty of manslaughter. During his imprisonment he assaults the prison governor, but the law detains him only two years in prison. He announces his intention to "go as a missionary to where the world ends,"<sup>63</sup> for he can anticipate only a desertic existence ahead of him. He describes his purpose as "to plant the Heavenly Standard among the seals,"<sup>64</sup> and takes a missionary post among the Eskimos. As he takes up his work in the polar extremity of the Earth, an unfriendly newspaper gives a sensational account:

'Murderer and Missionary. The main figure in a famous trial. . . is on his way to carry Christ to the remotest heathen — the tough little Eskimos, who have pushed nearer the Pole than any other man has cared to do, will shortly have this blood-thirsty clergyman whispering to them in a blizzard the Word of God.'<sup>65</sup>

In his last press notice it is reported that he has been killed by the Eskimos in revenge for his strangling of a parishioner. This projectile of a man, for whom encountering God was "like colliding with a locomotive,"<sup>66</sup> has pushed himself beyond the limits of humanity. Back on her Kenya plantation, his wife gives birth to their second child:



Her naming was more like a branding; she gave him the fearful name of Zero. She could see he would look like his terrible father; that he was fated to blast his way across space and time.<sup>67</sup>

Augustine Card's son is the offspring of a deranged man who attempted to transform himself into an abstract fighting machine. The name Zero connects him with the 'ultimate' weapon of destruction, the atomic bomb. In his account of the first atomic bomb explosion, William Lawrence describes the bomb-site in the centre of the section of New Mexico desert which was code named Trinity:

Everything relating to the gadget - the spot where it stood on its tower, the time scheduled for its blow-off, as well as the great god It of the occasion -were referred to as Zero, the code name for the test. For everyone concerned, Zero became the centre of the Universe. Time and space began and ended at Zero. All life centred on Zero. For everyone thought only of Zero and the zero hour, or rather the zero microsecond.<sup>68</sup>

We are all engaged, Lewis wrote in 1950, in "the dull problem of survival."<sup>69</sup> In the blasted ruins of London in which The Red Priest is set, a subterranean race of survivors camps in the shell pits and ekes an existence out of the rubbish of the Mews. Tribes of guttersnipes battle daily for survival in the ruins of the city. A neighbour of Father Card observes these "swarms of little pests created by the trash bins,"<sup>70</sup> which materialized after the war:

'All our waste products seem to come to life. Around the Mews are the empty, dignified streets. Although the houses seem unlived in, they are, in fact, fuller of people than ever. The rents are higher than ever, but the fashionable life is gone. These lonely streets and squares seem to have burst into a kind of sewer life by the agency of their daily refuse, which is . . .marched away by an army of brats.'<sup>71</sup>

Like rats and foxes<sup>72</sup> 'watching the roots' and like Satters clawing out a hole to hide in, these London guttersnipes are tokens of human resistance to Zero.









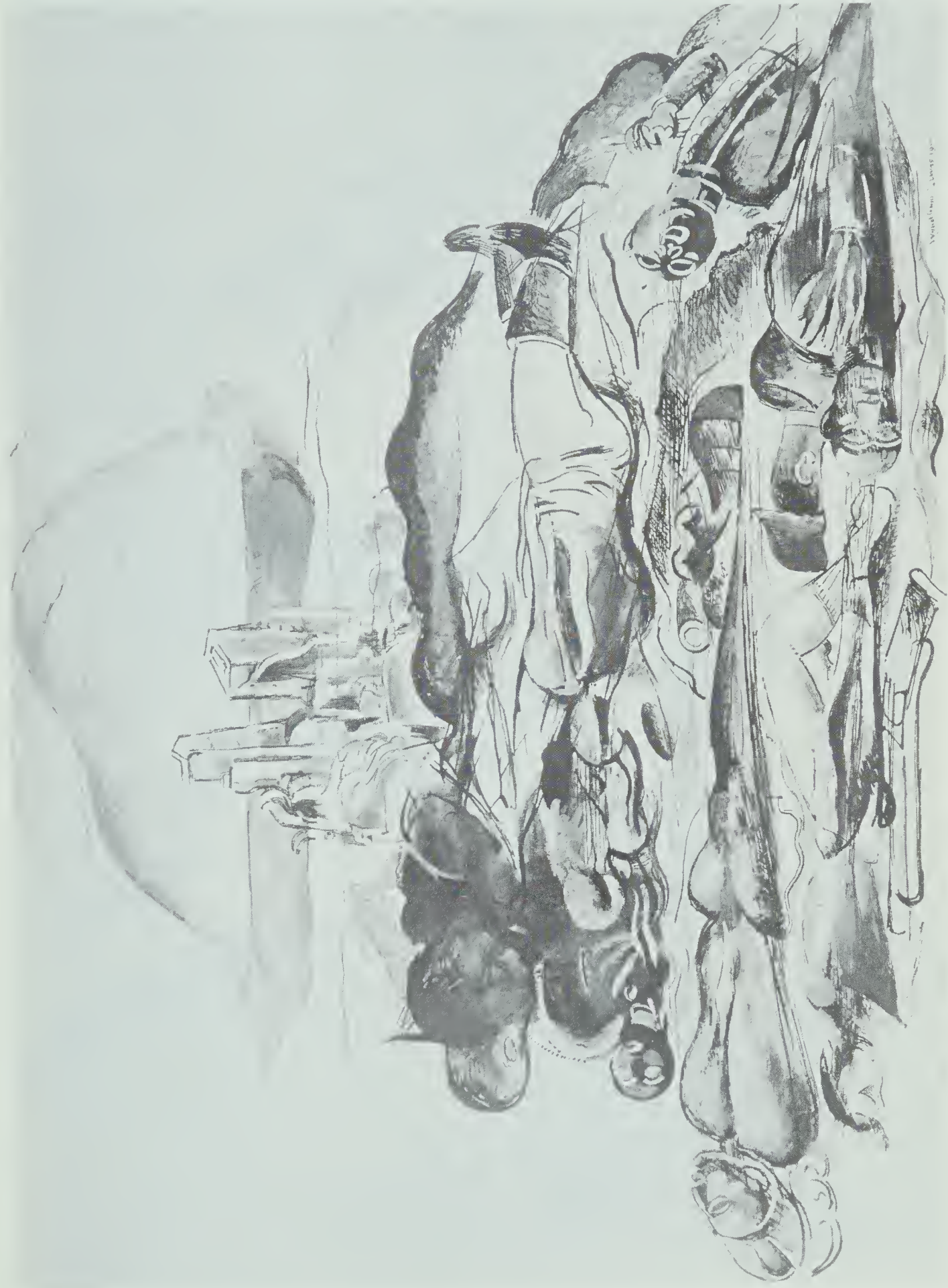


Plate 12









The Satire of Accommodation: Conclusion

Laughter is the strong elastic fish, caught in Styx, springing and flapping about until it dies.<sup>73</sup>

In a letter to Pope, Jonathan Swift repudiated the charge of misanthropy, often levelled against the satirist of society. "I do not hate Mankind," he wrote, "it is vous autres who hate them, because you would have them reasonable Animals, and are angry for being disappointed. I have always rejected that Definition, and made another of my own."<sup>74</sup> Like Swift, Lewis insisted on a candid definition of man. He wrote against a sentimental kindliness which might lead to the 'vulgarization of disgust' of one man for another.<sup>75</sup> Lewis recognized that the rapid acceleration of change in human culture constantly threw up new specimens for his analysis. Through his long career he confronted these new developments with the gusto of a scientist on a field trip. His refusal to face backward in angry disillusion was an affirmation that human intelligence was elastic enough to accommodate the future potential of the race:

Laughter is the brain-body's snort of exultation. It expresses its wild sensation of power and speed; it is all that remains physical in the flash of thought, its friction: or it may be a defiance flung at the hurrying fates.

The Wild Body is this supreme survival that is us, the stark apparatus with its set of mysterious spasms; the most profound of which is laughter.<sup>76</sup>





## FOOTNOTES

### Chapter One

<sup>1</sup>Lewis, Wyndham Lewis the Artist, 258.

<sup>2</sup>Lewis, Men Without Art, 116.

<sup>3</sup>Lewis, Rude Assignment, 10.

<sup>4</sup>Lewis, Men Without Art, 122.

<sup>5</sup>Lewis, Wyndham Lewis the Artist, 337.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 338.

<sup>7</sup>Lewis, The Wild Body, 233.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 234-235.

<sup>9</sup>Lewis, The Lion and the Fox, 171.

<sup>10</sup>"The innocent-looking, compassionate representation of an agony and death, like that of Othello, with its catharsis by means of tears and pity, is thus, as though in a dream, revealed as something else. It is a show of the same nature as a public execution. And the attraction of the story of the passion and agony on the Cross was naturally of the same order as that which took people to Tyburn; and the tudor playwright competed with the spectacle of bears and dogs rolling in agony in the sand of the bear-pit."

". . . . Shakespeare was in this sense a public executioner, a quiet and highly respectable man, as might be expected. His impassibility was the professional mask of the hangman."

Lewis, The Lion and the Fox, 144-145.

Continuing his theme of the sacrificial and public element of tragic execution, Lewis wrote that Shakespeare was "neither religious nor democratic, in any dogmatic sense, but philosophic. And so when he approached his hero in pursuance with his function as a writer of tragedies, it was not with the frenzied intolerance either of a messenger of the gods or of a malignant emissary of the crowd." His manner was rather like "those hangmen who when not engaged on their terrible trade are grocers or barbers in some small provincial town." Ibid., 179.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 186.

<sup>12</sup>Lewis makes these comments in the context of a passage he quotes from Vernon Lee's essay "The Italy of Elizabethan Dramatists":

"Brought face to face with these aberrations from the normal trend of human conduct, it was not with this indifference that the northern gothic mind reacted. Horrified and fascinated, it translated that horror and fascination into moral terms and infused into its Vittorias, Bosolas,



Vindicis, and the rest a superhuman struggle of the agonized soul with evil, absolutely unknown to the facile consciencelessness of the actual personages depicted. These overwrought tragedies. . .were only possible to the grim puritan inherent in the english nature."

Ibid., 178.

It is in contrast, then, to the horrified response of his contemporaries to the Machiavellian ethos that Shakespeare's intellectual discipline stands out.

<sup>13</sup>Lewis, Time and Western Man, 137.

<sup>14</sup>Lewis, The Diabolical Principle, 37-38.

<sup>15</sup>Lewis, The Writer and the Absolute, 197-198.

<sup>16</sup>Lewis, Time and Western Man, 129.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 418.

<sup>18</sup>Lewis, Paleface, 254.

<sup>19</sup>Lewis, Men Without Art, 278.

<sup>20</sup>Lewis, "Studies in the Art of Laughter," 511.

<sup>21</sup>Lewis, Men Without Art, 291.

<sup>22</sup>Lewis, Wyndham Lewis the Artist, 346.

<sup>23</sup>McLuhan, Through the Vanishing Point, 245.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 238.

<sup>25</sup>Lewis, The Lion and the Fox, 205.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 165.

<sup>27</sup>Lewis, Men Without Art, 27.

<sup>28</sup>Lewis, The Doom of Youth, 19.

Reviewing The Satiric Art of Evelyn Waugh by James F. Carens, Paul Wiley wrote of the satirists of a period like the contemporary one in which there seem to be no clear-cut norms of moral values:

"Whereas their possession of such values, agreeable or not, need not be denied, it is also conceivable that writers of this kind fulfill a special function, not in proposing norms, but in bringing to light and cogently dramatizing the intellectual or ethical conflicts of a transitional period."

Wiley, "Review, of The Satiric Art of Evelyn Waugh," 264.



<sup>29</sup>"The expansiveness that manifests itself in inventive or expressive work of any sort is essentially a movement to multiply the personality." Lewis, "The Foxes' Case," 73.

<sup>30</sup>Lewis, Wyndham Lewis the Artist, 102.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 157-158.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>34</sup>Lewis, Men Without Art, 125.

<sup>35</sup>Lewis, Wyndham Lewis the Artist, 257.

<sup>36</sup>Lewis, The Mysterious Mr. Bull, 232.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 231.

<sup>38</sup>Lewis, Men Without Art, 108.

<sup>39</sup>Lewis, Paleface, 270.

<sup>40</sup>Lewis, Rude Assignment, 125.

<sup>41</sup>Lewis, Wyndham Lewis the Artist, 344.

<sup>42</sup>Lewis, Men Without Art, 225.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>44</sup>Lewis, "The Cubist Room," Wyndham Lewis on Art, 57, 58.

<sup>45</sup>Lewis, The Mysterious Mr. Bull, 219.

<sup>46</sup>Lewis, Men Without Art, 106.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>48</sup>Lewis, The Lion and the Fox, 168.

<sup>49</sup>Lewis, Rude Assignment, 46-47.

<sup>50</sup>Lewis, Men Without Art, 112.

<sup>51</sup>Lewis, Wyndham Lewis the Artist, 336.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, 337.

<sup>53</sup>Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 239.

<sup>54</sup>Lewis, Malign Fiesta, 561.





<sup>55</sup>Lewis, Wyndham Lewis the Artist, 328.

"The charm of a game consists partly in our inordinate satisfaction with ourselves when we succeed in some trivial physical manoeuvre," Lewis continued. "Such satisfaction would be impossible without the existence of the humorous philosophy of sport. . . . Fundamentally that is nothing but a humorous (an artistic or philosophic) acknowledgement of our grotesque and prodigious limitation. Why we are able to embrace this philosophy without abjectness, is evidently on account of the great discrepancy that our consciousness of this situation predicates between what we can perfectly well imagine, and what, in the limited time, conditions, and space at our disposal, we can accomplish." Ibid., 328-329.

<sup>56</sup>Lewis, The Wild Body, 237.

<sup>57</sup>Lewis, Wyndham Lewis the Artist, 330.

<sup>58</sup>Lewis, Rude Assignment, 47.

<sup>59</sup>Lewis, Men Without Art, 124.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 108.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 12, 289, 11.

<sup>62</sup>"In a society whose values are so shifting and uncertain as ours, it can be readily understood that the nature of the authority by which the satirist holds up to scorn anything or anybody, is a major problem for him." Lewis, The Mysterious Mr. Bull, 142.

<sup>63</sup>Lewis, The Lion and the Fox, 79.

<sup>64</sup>Lewis, The Mysterious Mr. Bull, 145.

<sup>65</sup>Lewis, The Wild Body, 236.

<sup>66</sup>Lewis, Men Without Art, 288.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 288-289.

"It is unnecessary to enumerate the tragic handicaps that our human conditions involve—the glaring mechanical imperfections, the nervous tics, the prodigality of objectless movement—the, to other creatures, offensive smells, disagreeable moistures—the involuntary grimace, the lurch, roll, trot or stagger which we call our walk—it is only a matter of degree between us and the victim of locomotor-ataxy or St. Vitus's Dance." Ibid., 114.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 127.

<sup>69</sup>Lewis, The Wild Body, 237.

<sup>70</sup>Lewis, Wyndham Lewis the Artist, 323.



Writing of the resolution through laughter in dramatic art, Donald Soule used the language of 'survival,' 'adjustment,' and 'accommodation' to life:

"Comedy presents a kind of working compromise with life--in fact, a modus vivendi. . . . The origins of comedy, after all, lie mainly in fertility rites; those of tragedy in the ritual of death and symbolic reincarnation. Comedy's resolution, therefore, represents an accommodation--usually joyous, but not always--to the facts of life."  
 . . . . .  
 "But comedy speaks of winning here and now, not in symbol but in fact. Its subjects therefore are survival and expediency: means, not ends. This is the primary reason, incidentally, why comic plots are on the whole more mechanical and complicated than those of tragedy, for comedy is concerned with the means of survival. Even its laughter is a technique of adjustment."  
 Soule, "Comedy, Irony, and a Sense of Comprehension," 39.

71Lewis, Wyndham Lewis the Artist, 141-142.  
 72Lewis, Time and Western Man, 307.  
 73Lewis, Rude Assignment, 183.  
 74Lewis, The Wild Body, 158.  
 75Lewis, Time and Western Man, 199.  
 76Arnold, "Joubert," 180.  
 77Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 63-64.  
 78Lewis, Wyndham Lewis the Artist, 335.  
 79Lewis, Paleface, 87-88.  
 80Ibid., 90.  
 81Lewis, The Mysterious Mr. Bull, 155.  
 82Lewis, Wyndham Lewis the Artist, 127.

At another point, Lewis wrote that "art, at its fullest is a very great force indeed, a magic force, a sort of life, a very great 'reality.'" Lewis, The Diabolical Principle, 69.

Chapter Two

<sup>1</sup>Lewis published The Childermass: Section I (In the American edition called Part I) in June of 1928. The book was republished in November, 1956 under the title of The Human Age. Book I: Childermass after the 1955 publication of its sequels, Monstre Gai and Malign Fiesta. These latter comprise Books II and III of The Human Age and were published in



one volume by Methuen. The projected final book, The Trial of Man, was left incomplete at Lewis's death in 1957.

<sup>2</sup>Lewis, Childermass, 401. This speech is added with nearly a page of dialogue to the end of the book. The 1928 edition ends with the sentence "The Hyperideans, with outstretched arms, acclaim Polemon." In all subsequent reference, the initial citation will be to the original edition of 1928; following an oblique and the date (1956) will be the pagination for the later edition.

<sup>3</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 1. / (1956) 5.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 3. / (1956) 7.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 35. / (1956) 48.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 133. / (1956) 168.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 208-209. / (1956) 262-263.

<sup>8</sup>Lewis, "The Objective of Art in Our Time," in his Wyndham Lewis The Artist from Blast to Burlington House, 324, 325.

<sup>9</sup>This phrase is the final chapter-title in Lewis's The Art of Being Ruled.

<sup>10</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 61. / (1956) 80.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 1. / (1956) 5.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 7. / (1956) 12, 15.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 2. / (1956) 6.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 6. / (1956) 11.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 1. / (1956) 5.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 2. / (1956) 7.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 13. / (1956) 21.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 32. / (1956) 45.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 81. / (1956) 103.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 34. / (1956) 47.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 1. / (1956) 5.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 92. / (1956) 116, 117.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 94. / (1956) 119.



<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 75, 185, 292. / (1956) 96, 234, 365.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 120. / (1956) 152.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 14, 49. / (1956) 22-23, 65.

<sup>27</sup>One recalls here the lozenge-shaped tombstones of Pip's imagination in Dickens's Great Expectations. Concretionary sandstone is formed by the aggregation of solid particles of organic matter.

<sup>28</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 79. / (1956) 101.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 80. / (1956) 102.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 95. / (1956) 120.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 30. / (1956) 42.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 135. / (1956) 171.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 15. / (1956) 24-25.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 20. / (1956) 30.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 96. / (1956) 121.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 1. / (1956) 5-6.

<sup>37</sup>Lewis, Blasting and Bombardiering, 172-177.

<sup>38</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 132. / (1956) 153.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 22. / (1956) 33.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 87. / (1956) 110.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 13. / (1956) 21.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 15. / (1956) 23-24.

<sup>43</sup>Graves, Good-bye to All That, 211. Graves also gives an account of a night spent in the home of a friend whose brother had been killed in the Dardanelles. At three in the morning, Graves was awakened to "the diabolical yell and a succession of laughing, sobbing shrieks that sent me flying to the door." Awake all night in terror, Graves later told his friend that the experience was worse than being on the Front Line in France. "There were thousands of mothers like her," he concluded, "getting in touch with their dead sons by various spiritualistic means." Ibid., 191-192.

<sup>44</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 237. / (1956) 298.

<sup>45</sup>Notable among these accounts is Arthur Marwick's study of the process in his The Deluge, 226-246.





<sup>46</sup>Lewis, Blasting and Bombardiering, 140.

<sup>47</sup>Quoted in Marwick, The Deluge, 221.

<sup>48</sup>Lewis, Blasting and Bombardiering, 81.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 84.

<sup>50</sup>Lewis, Time and Western Man, 215.

<sup>51</sup>Lewis, Blasting and Bombardiering, 18-19.

<sup>52</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 45, 47. / (1956) 61, 62.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 134. / (1956) 169.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 97. / (1956) 122.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 156. / (1956) 197.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 292. / (1956) 365.

<sup>57</sup>Bunyan, The Pilgrim's Progress, 137. 2 Corinthians, 11. 13,14:  
"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves  
into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is trans-  
formed into an angel of light."

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 317.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 319.

<sup>60</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 73. / (1956) 94.

<sup>61</sup>Bunyan, The Pilgrim's Progress, 165, 321. Song of Solomon, 4. 13,  
14: "Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits;  
camphire, with spikenard. Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon,  
with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief  
spices."

<sup>62</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 7. / (1956) 12.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 142. / (1956) 179.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 291. / (1956) 363.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 123. / (1956) 156.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 13. / (1956) 21, 22.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 80. / (1956) 102.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 192. / (1956) 243.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 72. / (1956) 93.



- <sup>70</sup>Ibid., 135, 136. / (1956) 170, 171.
- <sup>71</sup>Ibid., 227. / (1956) 285.
- <sup>72</sup>Ibid., 159-161. / (1956) 125-127.
- <sup>73</sup>Ibid., 166. / (1956) 208.
- <sup>74</sup>Ibid., 73. / (1956) 93.
- <sup>75</sup>Ibid., 167. / (1956) 209.
- <sup>76</sup>Ibid., 185. / (1956) 233-234.
- <sup>77</sup>Ibid., 18. / (1956) 28.
- <sup>78</sup>Ibid., 35. / (1956) 48.
- <sup>79</sup>Ibid., 31. / (1956) 43.
- <sup>80</sup>Ibid., 28. / (1956) 40.
- <sup>81</sup>Ibid., 31. / (1956) 43-44.
- <sup>82</sup>Lewis, Time and Western Man, 414.
- <sup>83</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 90. / (1956) 114.
- <sup>84</sup>Ibid., 86. / (1956) 109.
- <sup>85</sup>Ibid., 69-70. / (1956) 90-91.
- <sup>86</sup>Lewis, Time and Western Man, 181. Lewis discussed Whitehead's concept of reiteration of pattern-values in the same section, on page 177.
- <sup>87</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 93-95. / (1956) 118-120.
- <sup>88</sup>Ibid., 96. / (1956) 121-122.
- <sup>89</sup>Whitehead, Science and the Modern World, 107, 103.
- <sup>90</sup>Lewis, Time and Western Man, 210.
- <sup>91</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 97. / (1956) 123.
- <sup>92</sup>Lewis, Time and Western Man, 409.
- <sup>93</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 110, 111, 112. / (1956) 141, 143.
- <sup>94</sup>Ibid., 124. / (1956) 157.
- <sup>95</sup>Lewis, Time and Western Man, 435.
- <sup>96</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 288-289. / (1956) 362.



- <sup>97</sup>Ibid., 9, 11, 98. / (1956) 16-17, 19, 124.
- <sup>98</sup>Ibid., 114, 116. / (1956) 145, 148.
- <sup>99</sup>Ibid., 7. / (1956) 15.
- <sup>100</sup>Ibid., 117, 119. / (1956) 149, 151.
- <sup>101</sup>Ibid., 158. / (1956) 198-199.
- <sup>102</sup>Ibid., 2. / (1956) 6.
- <sup>103</sup>Ibid., 112. / (1956) 143.
- <sup>104</sup>Ibid., 8. / (1956) 15.
- <sup>105</sup>Ibid., 10. / (1956) 65.
- <sup>106</sup>Ibid., 49. / (1956) 65.
- <sup>107</sup>Ibid., 4. / (1956) 8.
- <sup>108</sup>Ibid., (1956) 401. The speech is added to the revised edition.
- <sup>109</sup>Ibid., 21. / (1956) 31.
- <sup>110</sup>Lewis, Time and Western Man, 414.
- <sup>111</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 37. / (1956) 50.
- <sup>112</sup>Bridson, "The Making of The Human Age," 164.
- <sup>113</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 119. / (1956) 151. Robey billed himself as 'The Prime Minister of Mirth'. Mander, British Music Hall, 123, 124, 125.
- <sup>114</sup>Lewis, Time and Western Man, 364-365.
- <sup>115</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 125, 126. / (1956) 158-160.
- <sup>116</sup>Ibid., 127. / (1956) 161.
- <sup>117</sup>Pullman tells Satters that the Bailiff is drunk with enthusiasm and with God. "'...it is dionysiac he says, an abstemious drunkenness . . . ." Ibid., 73-74. / (1956) 94.
- <sup>118</sup>Ibid., 212. / (1956) 267.
- <sup>119</sup>Ibid., 63. / (1956) 81, 82.
- <sup>120</sup>Ibid., 73. / (1956) 94.
- <sup>121</sup>Ibid., 151. / (1956) 190.





<sup>122</sup>Ibid., 290. / (1956) 363.

<sup>123</sup>Marwick, The Deluge, 39.

<sup>124</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 66. / (1956) 85.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid., 64. / (1956) 83.

<sup>126</sup>Ibid., 148. / (1956) 186. The Bailiff calls himself the "conjurer of the crowd's conceit." Ibid., 266. / (1956) 333. Referring to the specious Dictatorship of the Proletariat in Stalinist Russia, Lewis wrote, "the Czar Stalin is the dictator, and he says 'Le Proletariat, c'est moi!'" Hitler, 195.

<sup>127</sup>See "Part IX: Man and Shaman" in The Art of Being Ruled.

<sup>128</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 134. / (1956) 169.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid., 167. / (1956) 209.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid., 170. / (1956) 213. Swatchel is a slang term for Punch in Punch and Judy shows. A swatchel-cove is a Punch and Judy man, especially the patterer. A swatch is a term used for a sample of cloth in the weaving trade, in dyeing, for example. Eric Partridge, in his A Dictionary of the Underworld writes that a swatch is a sample of stolen merchandise offered to a 'fence' by a thief or cove.

<sup>131</sup>Ibid., 172. / (1956) 216.

<sup>132</sup>Ibid., 163. / (1956) 205.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid., 202, 200. / (1956) 254, 252-253.

<sup>134</sup>Ibid., 284, 285. / (1956) 355, 356.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid., 286-287, 287. / (1956) 358, 359.

<sup>136</sup>Ibid., 288. / (1956) 359.

<sup>137</sup>Ibid., 151, 152. / (1956) 190, 191.

<sup>138</sup>Ibid., 262. / (1956) 327.

<sup>139</sup>Ibid., 321. / (1956) 400.

<sup>140</sup>Ibid., 272. / (1956) 340.

<sup>141</sup>Ibid., 152. / (1956) 191.

<sup>142</sup>Ibid., 262. / (1956) 328-329.

<sup>143</sup>Ibid., 152-153. / (1956) 192.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid., 316. / (1956) 394.



<sup>145</sup>Ibid., 252-253. / (1956) 316, 317.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid., 254. / (1956) 318.

<sup>147</sup>Ibid., 294. / (1956) 367.

<sup>148</sup>Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 12. Of Alectryon, Lewis writes that his passivity "expresses the aloofness of the instrument whose private interest is in no way involved in the event. When called upon by Polemon it is almost as an automaton that he approaches the tribune and swings himself up on to its platform." Lewis, The Childermass, 295. / (1956) 369.

<sup>149</sup>Ibid., 263, 281. / (1956) 330, 351.

<sup>150</sup>Ibid., 155. / (1956) 195.

<sup>151</sup>Ibid., 237-238. / (1956) 298-299.

<sup>152</sup>Lewis, The Enemy. I, x.

<sup>153</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 70. / (1956) 90-91.

<sup>154</sup>Lewis, Time and Western Man, 137.

<sup>155</sup>Ibid., 167-168.

<sup>156</sup>Ibid., 3, 5.

<sup>157</sup>Ibid., 265.

<sup>158</sup>Ibid., 27.

<sup>159</sup>Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 229. Joint was the title of a large collection of fragmentary works Lewis was working on through the nineteen-twenties.

<sup>160</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 146. / (1956) 184.

<sup>161</sup>Lewis, The Enemy. I, x.

<sup>162</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 212. / (1956) 266.

<sup>163</sup>Ibid., 224, 225. / (1956) 282, 283.

<sup>164</sup>Ibid., 222. / (1956) 279.

<sup>165</sup>Ibid., 226. / (1956) 284.

<sup>166</sup>Ibid., 75. / (1956) 96.

<sup>167</sup>Ibid., 115. / (1956) 146-147.



<sup>168</sup>Ibid., 71. / (1956) 91.

<sup>169</sup>Ibid., 280. / (1956) 350, 351.

<sup>170</sup>Ibid., 281-282. / (1956) 352. Lucian gives an account of the children's attempt to pile up a staircase to the gates of Heaven in "Charon Sees Life," in Conversations in the Underworld, Satirical Sketches, 80. The original story is in the Odyssey, xi, 315-316.

<sup>171</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 247. / (1956) 310.

<sup>172</sup>Ibid., 48. / (1956) 64.

<sup>173</sup>Ibid., 156. / (1956) 196.

<sup>174</sup>Lewis, Time and Western Man, 42.

<sup>175</sup>Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 83.

<sup>176</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 266. / (1956) 333.

<sup>177</sup>Ibid., 237. / (1956) 297.

<sup>178</sup>Ibid., 153. / (1956) 192, 193.

<sup>179</sup>Ibid., 150. / (1956) 189.

<sup>180</sup>Ibid., 3. / (1956) 7.

<sup>181</sup>Ibid., 159, 210, 316. / (1956) 200, 265, 393.

<sup>182</sup>Ibid., 163. / (1956) 205.

<sup>183</sup>Lewis, Time and Western Man, 215.

<sup>184</sup>Le Bon, The Crowd, 31.

Or, des observations attentives paraissent prouver que l'individu plongé depuis quelque temps au sein d'une foule agissante, tombe bientôt — par suite des effluves qui s'en dégagent, ou par toute autre cause encore ignorée — dans un état particulier, se rapprochant beaucoup de l'état de fascination de l'hypnotisé entre les mains de son hypnotiseur. Psychologie des Foules, 14.

<sup>185</sup>Le Bon, The Crowd, 36.

La foule, jouet de tous les stimulants extérieurs, en reflète les incessantes variations. Elle est donc l'esclave des impulsions reçues. Psychologie des Foules, 17.

<sup>186</sup>Le Bon, The Crowd, 36.

Aucun lieu logique d'analogie ou de succession ne rattachant entre elles ces idées-images, elles peuvent se substituer l'une à l'autre comme les verres de la lanterne magique que l'opérateur retire de la boîte où ils étaient superposés. On peut donc voir dans les foules se succéder les





idées les plus contradictoires. Psychologie des Foules, 32.

In his discussion of the effects of sensory imbalance on the perception of reality, Lewis too drew upon the metaphor of the illusionist. "As most of Maskeleyne's illusions are effected by arrangements of looking-glasses, they would very well illustrate this theory [the relativity of space-perception], which is almost entirely based on the experiences of a looking-glass world. It is a world in which the image comes to life, and the picture, under suitable conditions, moves and lives inside its frame." Lewis, Time and Western Man, 417-418.

<sup>187</sup>Le Bon, The Crowd, 84.

Un être possédant le pouvoir magique de varier le temps à son gré aurait la puissance que les croyants attribuent à leurs Dieux. Psychologie des Foules, 49.

<sup>188</sup>Le Bon, The Crowd, 125, 126.

". . . il se forme ce qu'on appelle un courant d'opinion et le puissant mécanisme de la contagion intervient." Psychologie des Foules, 73.

La contagion n'exige pas la présence simultanée d'individus sur un seul point; elle peut se faire à distance sous l'influence de certains événements orientant les esprits dans leur même sens et leur donnant les caractères spéciaux aux foules, surtout quand ils sont préparés par les facteurs lointains que j'ai étudiés plus haut. Psychologie des Foules, 73.

<sup>189</sup>Ibid., 203.

<sup>190</sup>Ibid., 13, 23.

<sup>191</sup>Lewis, Time and Western Man, 43.

<sup>192</sup>Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 423.

<sup>193</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 134. / (1956) 169.

<sup>194</sup>Ibid., 136, 137, 139. / (1956) 172, 173, 175.

<sup>195</sup>Ibid., 139-140. / (1956) 180-181. A contemporary parallel to the Bailiff's control of the Camp press is Lloyd George's ownership of many British newspapers during his political career. In 1922, he made an attempt to buy The Times, following the death of Lord Northcliff. On these points, see McCormick, The Mask of Merlin, 233-234 and Jones, Lloyd George, 196.

<sup>196</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 142-143. / (1956) 180-181.

<sup>197</sup>Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 3.

<sup>198</sup>Marwick, The Deluge, 229-230.

<sup>199</sup>Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 111.



<sup>200</sup>Ibid., 164-165.

<sup>201</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 259. / (1956) 325.

<sup>202</sup>Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 118.

<sup>203</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 274. / (1956) 343.

<sup>204</sup>Ibid., 260. / (1956) 326.

<sup>205</sup>Ibid., 5. / (1956) 9.

<sup>206</sup>Ibid., 77. / (1956) 98.

<sup>207</sup>Ibid., 259. / (1956) 325.

<sup>208</sup>Ibid., 138. / (1956) 174. "Have with You to Saffron Walden" is the title of Thomas Nashe's satire on Gabriel Harvey, published in 1596. In the first section of his pamphlet Satire and Fiction, Lewis presented "The History of a Rejected Review" (of the novel The Apes of God). The subtitle of the essay was "Have with You to Great Queen Street." Saffron Walden was the home city of the Harvey family. The offices of The New Statesman, which refused to publish the review, were located in Great Queen Street in 1930.

<sup>209</sup>Lewis, Blasting and Bombardiering, 38.

On the Futurists' theories of dynamism see Clough, Futurism, 68-72 and 78-88. On the electric light, see Carrieri, Futurism, 40-42.

<sup>210</sup>This review is primarily a summary of the information in The Encyclopedia Britannica (Eleventh Edition) under the topic-heading Hypnosis.

<sup>211</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 66. / (1956) 85.

<sup>212</sup>Ibid., 162. / (1956) 203-204.

<sup>213</sup>Ibid., 124. / (1956) 157.

<sup>214</sup>Ibid., 126. / (1956) 160.

<sup>215</sup>Ibid., 262. / (1956) 329.

<sup>216</sup>Ibid., 233. / (1956) 293.

<sup>217</sup>Ibid., 150. / (1956) 189.

<sup>218</sup>Ibid., 132. / (1956) 167. The Carnegie Trust provided funds to the B.B.C. during its formative years, notably for the beginning of Kent school broadcasts. Briggs, The Birth of Broadcasting, 262.

<sup>219</sup>Ibid., 223-224. / (1956) 281.



- <sup>220</sup>Ibid., 182. / (1956) 230.
- <sup>221</sup>Ibid., 256. / (1956) 321.
- <sup>222</sup>Ibid., 133, 272. / (1956) 168, 340.
- <sup>223</sup>Ibid., 169. / (1956) 213, 212.
- <sup>224</sup>Ibid., 258. / (1956) 324.
- <sup>225</sup>Ibid., 201. / (1956) 253.
- <sup>226</sup>Ibid., 261. / (1956) 327.
- <sup>227</sup>Ibid., 246. / (1956) 308.
- <sup>228</sup>Ibid., 51, 52. / (1956) 68,69.
- <sup>229</sup>Ibid., 56. / (1956) 72, 73.
- <sup>230</sup>Ibid., 57, 58. / (1956) 75, 75-76.
- <sup>231</sup>Ibid., 107, 107-108. / (1956) 136-137, 137.
- <sup>232</sup>Ibid., 113. / (1956) 144.
- <sup>233</sup>Ibid., 115. / (1956) 146.
- <sup>234</sup>Lewis, Time and Western Man, 130.
- <sup>235</sup>Ibid., 419.
- <sup>236</sup>Ibid., 431.
- <sup>237</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 319. / (1956) 397.
- <sup>238</sup>Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 15.
- <sup>239</sup>Lewis, Time and Western Man, 6.
- <sup>240</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 149. / (1956) 188.
- <sup>241</sup>Ibid., 247. / (1956) 343.
- <sup>242</sup>Briggs, The Birth of Broadcasting, 63.
- <sup>243</sup>Blythe, The Age of Illusion, 57.
- <sup>244</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 138-139. / (1956) 175.
- <sup>245</sup>Ibid., 177, 178. / (1956) 224, 225.
- <sup>246</sup>Ibid., 132, 317. / (1956) 167, 394. In the first example here cited, the phrase reads 'their master's eye,' but the play is obvious.



<sup>247</sup>McCormick, The Mask of Merlin, 20.

<sup>248</sup>Owen, Tempestuous Journey, 694-695.

<sup>249</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 158. / (1956) 199.

<sup>250</sup>Ibid., 139. / (1956) 176.

<sup>251</sup>Briggs, The Birth of Broadcasting, 260.

<sup>252</sup>Blythe, The Age of Illusion, 67.

<sup>253</sup>Reith, Broadcast over Britain, 116, 114. Reith composed this autobiography in 1949 out of materials he had been recording in his diary through the events.

<sup>254</sup>Quoted by Briggs, The Birth of Broadcasting, 405.

<sup>255</sup>Ibid., 21.

<sup>256</sup>Lewis, Rude Assignment, 199.

<sup>257</sup>Stanley Baldwin used these verbal counters in speeches he made after the Red Friday settlement of 1924 and again during the General Strike, in a broadcast on the B.B.C. These speeches are quoted by Symons, in The General Strike, 19, 180.

<sup>258</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 95. / (1956) 120.

<sup>259</sup>Ibid., 145. / (1956) 182.

<sup>260</sup>Ibid., 240. / (1956) 302.

<sup>261</sup>Ibid., 243, 242. / (1956) 305, 304.

<sup>262</sup>Symons, The General Strike, 7.

<sup>263</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 109. / (1956) 139-140.

Ira David Sankey and Dwight Lyman Moody compiled their Sacred Songs and Solos (popularly known as Sankey and Moody's Songs) for the Methodist Home Mission Service in 1873.

<sup>264</sup>Ibid., 212, 213. / (1956) 267, 267-268.

<sup>265</sup>Ibid., 227. / (1956) 285.

<sup>266</sup>Ibid., 233, 235. / (1956) 293, 295.

<sup>267</sup>Ibid., 235. / (1956) 296.

<sup>268</sup>Ibid., 188. / (1956) 237.

<sup>269</sup>Ibid., 190. / (1956) 240-241.





<sup>270</sup>Un homme se présenta, nu jusqu'à la ceinture, comme les masseurs des bains. Il était très grand, vieux, décharné, et portait sur la cuisse un coutelas dans une gaine de bronze. Sa chevalure, relevée par un peigne, exagérait la logueur de son front. Une somnolence décolorait ses yeux, mais ses dents brillaient, et ses orteils posaient légèrement sur les dalles, tout son corps ayant la souplesse d'un singe, et sa figure l'impassibilité d'une momie.  
 Flaubert, "Hérodias," Trois Contes, 142-143.

There may be a contemporary political analogue to the scene as well, in the uneasy relations between Lloyd George and the leadership of the Liberal Party after the General Strike, that is in October, 1926. Lloyd George had at that time a large 'Party Fund' which he used as a bait in attempting to re-organize the Party to his own design. Before he would turn over the funds to the party, Lloyd George insisted that the past chairman of the Administrative Committee, Mr. Vivian Phillipps, give up his office. The next meeting of the Committee was packed with Lloyd George supporters, and Phillipps's resignation was duly called for. The Morning Post commented: "The money is paid over and the body of Mr. Vivian Phillipps is thrown out of the committee-room door! Not since the head of John the Baptist was delivered on a charger has there been a transaction more crudely and cruelly direct. . . ."  
 McCormick, The Mask of Merlin, 255-256.

<sup>271</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 194. / (1956) 245.

<sup>272</sup>Ibid., 195-196. / (1956) 247.

<sup>273</sup>Ibid., 197. / (1956) 248, 249.

<sup>274</sup>Lewis, The Apes of God, 618.

<sup>275</sup>Symons, The General Strike, 160.

<sup>276</sup>McElwee, Britain's Locust Years, 120.

<sup>277</sup>Thompson, England in the Twentieth Century, 112.

<sup>278</sup>McElwee, Britain's Locust Years, 126-127.

<sup>279</sup>Symons, The General Strike, 177.

<sup>280</sup>Briggs, The Birth of Broadcasting, 377, 384.

<sup>281</sup>McElwee, Britain's Locust Years, 126.

<sup>282</sup>These are the terms that the negotiator for the miners, Herbert Smith, laid down. See, for examples, Ibid., 124.

<sup>283</sup>Symons, The General Strike, 180. We note in Baldwin's speech the comfortably egalitarian phrase, 'between man and man.' Lewis seems deliberately to have echoed this phrase in the exchange between Moody and the Bailiff. "'I sez Hodds wot yewwiz Milord sez I as one man to another."  
 Lewis, The Childermass, 243. / (1956) 305.



### Chapter Three

<sup>1</sup>Lewis began his first series of articles on Hitler for Time and Tide, beginning in January, 1931—two full years before Hitler came to power as Chancellor on January 30, 1933. The articles emphasized from the beginning that the political fate of Europe was tied to the developments of National Socialism in Germany. Specifically, Lewis saw in Hitler's opposition to Germany's being crippled by war reparations and credit finance a return to a healthy and sane understanding of economics. Lewis's admiration for the vitality and seeming social concern of the Hitler movement proved to be overly sanguine as Hitler's power grew during the 1930's. Lewis's use of a reversed swastika (a hex-sign) on the spine of his book, and his publication of a photograph showing the Hitler Youth holding the symbol backwards, draws the reader's closer attention to the meaning of the 'parade of standards' at work in Germany. Hitler, cover, 52, 194.

The book Hitler deserves close attention too in that Lewis created a satiric persona in several of the chapters, through which he examined the complacency and insularity of British public leaders. The persona is, perhaps, a precursor of the early Blimp. Note for example passages where the narrator boasts that, lest he become a 'credit-crank', he snapped shut a book analyzing the deficiencies of credit-financing in the capitalist economic system: "Nothing would induce me ever to touch that book. I am more intelligent now even than I was then, and I know that the moment I opened it and began reading I should become a 'Credit-crank' on the spot, or might quite well at all events, and would never be able to look my bank-manager in the face again." Hitler, 163.

The Hitler Cult, The Vulgar Streak, and many of Lewis's published letters trace Lewis's straightforward recanting of parts of the early book on Hitler.

<sup>2</sup>Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 44. Lewis, Letters, 287.

<sup>3</sup>Lewis uses this phrase in several works. See Rude Assignment, 169.

<sup>4</sup>Lewis, Rude Assignment, 64.

<sup>5</sup>Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 47.

<sup>6</sup>Lewis, Letters, 367.

<sup>7</sup>Holloway, The Charted Mirror, 128-9.

<sup>8</sup>Pound, "Augment of the Novel," 2, 6.

<sup>9</sup>McLuhan, Through the Vanishing Point, 193.

<sup>10</sup>Lewis, Men Without Art, 263.

<sup>11</sup>Lewis, The Writer and the Absolute, 198.

<sup>12</sup>Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 167.



<sup>13</sup>Lewis, Paleface, 270.

<sup>14</sup>Lewis, "The Art of the Great Race," 72.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 70.

<sup>16</sup>Lewis explains his use of this phrase in Rude Assignment, 169: 'The Art of Being Ruled' might be described from some points of view as an infernal Utopia. For epigraph it has a quotation from Chapman's 'Duke of Byron' as follows:

and they make  
A doctrinal and witty hieroglyphic  
Of a blessed kingdom.

<sup>17</sup>Lewis, "The Art of the Great Race," 70.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 71.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 72.

<sup>20</sup>Lewis, "The Objective of Art in our Time," [Wyndham Lewis the Artist from Blast to Burlington House], 346.

<sup>21</sup>McLuhan, Through the Vanishing Point, 165.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 193.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 244-5.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 241.

<sup>25</sup>Lewis, Blasting and Bombardiering, 3.

<sup>26</sup>Lewis, "The Art of the Great Race," 72.

<sup>27</sup>Lewis, Men Without Art, 8-9.

<sup>28</sup>Pound, Mauberley.

<sup>29</sup>Lewis, Wyndham Lewis the Artist from Blast to Burlington House, 125. (Lewis here reprints "Notes and Vortices," Blast I, 132.)

<sup>30</sup>Lewis, Blasting and Bombardiering, 6.

<sup>31</sup>Lewis, Letters, 305-6.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 333. (This is an earlier draft of a letter sent to H.G. Wells in July of 1942. Rose quotes both versions in his collection, and I cite Lewis's remarks for the reasons I give in my text.)

<sup>33</sup>Lewis, "The Art of the Great Race," 70.

<sup>34</sup>Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 229.





<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 9, 35.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 12.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 93.

<sup>39</sup>Lewis, The Hitler Cult, 25.

<sup>40</sup>Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 103, 104.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 32-33.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 42.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 136-7.

<sup>44</sup>See the following O.E.D. entries: Pen [a. Brythonic (Welsh, Cornish) pen - head] and Pendragon [Welsh = chief leader in war, dux bellorum, f. pen head + dragon].

<sup>45</sup>Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 30.

<sup>46</sup>Lewis, The Wild Body, 234-5.

<sup>47</sup>Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 180.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 176-7.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 232.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 239-40

<sup>51</sup>This is a conscious reversal of the Bergsonian formula. See, for example, "Les attitudes, gestes et mouvements du corps humain sont risibles dans l'exacte mesure où ce corps nous fait penser à une simple mécaniques." Le Rire, 30.

<sup>52</sup>Lewis, The Wild Body, 235.

<sup>53</sup>Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 30.

<sup>54</sup>Lewis, "Studies in the Art of Laughter," 513.

<sup>55</sup>Lewis, Letters, 246.

<sup>56</sup>Lewis, "Studies in the Art of Laughter," 515.

<sup>57</sup>Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 11.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 179.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 13.



- <sup>60</sup>Ibid., 33.
- <sup>61</sup>Ibid., 62.
- <sup>62</sup>Ibid., 41.
- <sup>63</sup>Ibid., 34.
- <sup>64</sup>Ibid., 28.
- <sup>65</sup>Ibid., 74.
- <sup>66</sup>Ibid., 83.
- <sup>67</sup>Ibid., 33-4.
- <sup>68</sup>Ibid., 37.
- <sup>69</sup>Ibid., 43.
- <sup>70</sup>Ibid., 217.
- <sup>71</sup>Ibid., 79.
- <sup>72</sup>Ibid., 104-5.
- <sup>73</sup>Ibid., 166.
- <sup>74</sup>Ibid., 15.
- <sup>75</sup>Ibid., 18.
- <sup>76</sup>Ibid., 85.
- <sup>77</sup>Lewis, "The Code of a Herdsman," (Imaginary Letters III) 5.
- <sup>78</sup>Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 51.
- <sup>79</sup>Ibid., 206.
- <sup>80</sup>Ibid., 215-6.
- <sup>81</sup>Ibid., 234-5.
- <sup>82</sup>Ibid., 78.
- <sup>83</sup>Ibid., 75-6.
- <sup>84</sup>Ibid., 46.
- <sup>85</sup>Ibid., 71.
- <sup>86</sup>Ibid., 109.



<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 139

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 147.

<sup>89</sup>This linkage is made deliberately. In a letter to Robert Hale, written 1941, Lewis commented that he had in mind no live model for Martin Penny-Smythe, "Penhale's Horatio." Letters, 306.

<sup>90</sup>Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 149.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., 37.

<sup>92</sup>Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 13.

<sup>93</sup>Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 190.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., 182.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., 229.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., 221-6; 208-16.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., 29-30.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., 141.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., 143.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., 145.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., 165.

<sup>102</sup>See, for examples, The Vulgar Streak, 104, 106, 112, 145, 166, 168.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., 166.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid., 224.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., 145-6.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid., 226.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., 107. See also ". . .their eyes both held a consciousness of the same injustice. . .for which there was no help--unless one could obtain it by fraud or force. Both had tasted for too long the hopelessness of rebellion." 111.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., 112.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid., 106.

<sup>110</sup>Lewis, Paleface, 79-80.

<sup>111</sup>See The Writer and the Absolute, Chapter X, "Malraux and Escape through Action," 88-96.



<sup>112</sup>Lewis, "Preface," 8. In Somerville, H. Madness in Shakespeare's Tragedy.

<sup>113</sup>Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 184. Mr. Perl here echoes Vincent's comment, "The actor who plays all the time the Prince of Denmark, in the end is more Hamlet than anything else." 37.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., 11.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid., 127.

<sup>116</sup>In the case of the image that flashes before Maddie's mind, Lewis may be echoing Dostoevsky's technique in Crime and Punishment, where a guilt-ridden Raskolnikov is suddenly stricken by the vision of a white horse felled by a blow and dying by the side of the road.

Lewis has used the device elsewhere in his novels. Two examples that come to mind immediately are the latter's dummy episode in Snooty Baronet and Margot's experience with the Spanish dwarf in The Revenge for Love. In all the instances cited, Lewis allows these fantasies to evoke a moment of hysterical self-knowledge in his characters.

<sup>117</sup>See, for example, Ibid., 9, 13-15, 39-40.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid., 35.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid., 84.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid., 234.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid., 208.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid., 210, 237.

<sup>123</sup>Ibid., 227-8.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid., 191.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid., 194. The moustache is also called Vincent's "musketeer moustache," 218.

<sup>126</sup>Ibid., 211.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid., 104.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid., 205.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid., 227.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid., 183.

<sup>131</sup>Ibid., 14.





<sup>132</sup>We are prepared to some extent for this transformation by the scene described at Previtali's. "The waiters, out of their sallow masks, were eyeing the English party like a ring of slovenly birds of prey, with an impolite semi-oriental fixity, of bold black eyes. They were far enough gone, they judged, these preposterous Englishes, for it to be no longer necessary to dissemble. They gathered in a scowling ring. The Vulgar Streak, 89.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid., 240.

<sup>134</sup>Lewis, The Writer and the Absolute, 94-5.

<sup>135</sup>Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 238.

<sup>136</sup>Lewis, The Hitler Cult, 177.

<sup>137</sup>Lewis, Men Without Art, 9.

<sup>138</sup>Kenner, Wyndham Lewis, 124-5.

<sup>139</sup>Eliot, The Sacred Wood, 100.

<sup>140</sup>Lewis, Time and Western Man, 445.

<sup>141</sup>Ibid., 403.

<sup>142</sup>Ibid., 171.

<sup>143</sup>Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 183.

<sup>144</sup>This is Vincent's term. The Vulgar Streak, 232. Lewis is breaking up a cliché from an effete past. The 'sickness of the Twentieth Century' would surely be a more menacing complaint than the 'mal de siècle' of the Nineteenth. Vincent's malady might be diagnosed as an insatiable hunger for power, passed on to the New Age from Darwin and Nietzsche.

<sup>145</sup>Lewis, The Hitler Cult, 43.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid., 32.

<sup>147</sup>Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 234.

<sup>148</sup>Ibid., 181.

<sup>149</sup>Lewis, The Hitler Cult, 32.

<sup>150</sup>Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 183.

<sup>151</sup>Lewis, The Hitler Cult, 195.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid., 58.

<sup>153</sup>Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 18.



<sup>154</sup>Dallas Wiebe, in his dissertation on "Reality and Wyndham Lewis's Theory of Fiction," discusses several of these shared features. See his fourth chapter, "The Vulgar Streak: The Unreal Mind of the Man of Action." 120-70.

<sup>155</sup>Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 116-7.

<sup>156</sup>Lewis, The Hitler Cult, 37. See also 88.

<sup>157</sup>Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 55. Alan Bullock quotes an account of Hitler's oratorical rapport with his audience. The writer is one of Hitler's many critics who wrote reminiscences of the Führer:

Hitler responds to the vibration of the human heart with the delicacy of a seismograph, or perhaps of a wireless receiving set, enabling him, with a certainty which no conscious gift could endow him, to act as a loud-speaker proclaiming the most secret desires, the least admissable instincts, the sufferings, and personal revolts of a whole nation. . . .

From Otto Strasser. Hitler and I, 74. Quoted Bullock, Hitler, 373.

<sup>158</sup>Bullock, Hitler, 377.

<sup>159</sup>*Ibid.*, 374.

<sup>160</sup>Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 269-274.

<sup>161</sup>Lewis, The Hitler Cult, 76.

<sup>162</sup>*Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>163</sup>Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 195.

<sup>164</sup>Lewis, The Hitler Cult, 39-40.

<sup>165</sup>Lewis, Men Without Art, 263.

<sup>166</sup>Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 16.

<sup>167</sup>See Lewis, The Lion and the Fox, 82, where Lewis quoted Machiavelli's description of a Borgia Pope:

Alexander the Sixth did nothing but deceive men, nor ever thought of doing otherwise, and he always found victims; for there never was a man who had greater power in asserting, or who with greater oaths would affirm a thing yet would observe it less. . . . Therefore it is unnecessary for a prince to have all the good qualities I have enumerated, but it is very necessary to appear to have them. And. . .to have them and always observe them is injurious. . . . to appear to have them is useful: to appear merciful, faithful, humane, religious, upright, and to be so, but with a mind so framed that should you require not to be so, you may be able and know how to change to the opposite.

Again, Lewis quoted from Machiavelli's Euphorion in The Hitler Cult, 40.



<sup>168</sup>Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 234.

<sup>169</sup>Lewis, The Hitler Cult, 89.

<sup>170</sup>Ibid., 62.

<sup>171</sup>Bullock, Hitler, 375.

<sup>172</sup>Lewis, The Hitler Cult, 125.

<sup>173</sup>Bullock, Hitler, 375. See also Lewis's comment on Hitler's simplicity of ideas. "To anyone who did not know him he would sound false and unconvincing. Hitler's intellectual limitations sometimes cause him to seem less sincere than he is, just as that happens with a bad actor.

Yet in the above passage, just about how Herr Hitler actually thinks is made evident—in tired, moralistic terms, or virtuous and wicked persons; in which his would always be the virtuous. Herr Hitler cannot think better than that. It is as near as he can get to the truth." The Hitler Cult, 119.

<sup>174</sup>Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 15.

<sup>175</sup>Ibid., 20.

<sup>176</sup>Ibid., 14.

<sup>177</sup>Ibid., 187.

<sup>178</sup>Ibid., 91.

<sup>179</sup>See A.J.P. Taylor's account of this period for documentation of my comments:  
On September 28 Chamberlain spoke in the House of Commons. He had already appealed to Mussolini as mediator; and he had good grounds for believing that this mediation would be successful. British opinion had been hardening: the Czechs, not the Sudeten Germans, were now regarded by many as the oppressed people. Chamberlain wished to silence this opposition; and he therefore stressed the danger of war, not the justice of Germany's claims. The manoeuvre worked. When, towards the end of his speech, he announced—in a calculatedly dramatic way—that the Four Powers were to meet at Munich, the House broke into hysterical relief—at any rate on the Conservative side. 'Thank God for the Prime Minister,' This was a triumph with bitter fruits. Appeasement had begun as an impartial consideration of rival claims and the remedying of past faults. Then it had been justified by the French fear of war. Now its motives seemed to be fear on the part of the British themselves. The Origins of the Second World War, 227-8.

<sup>180</sup>Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 84.

<sup>181</sup>Ibid., 68.





<sup>182</sup>See, for examples, Rude Assignment, 51; The Mysterious Mr. Bull, 234. Again, in an essay written for the Europäische Revue in 1937, Lewis wrote of the British democratic politics of the day as 'die grosse sanfte Mittel.' "Insel und Weltreich," 703.

<sup>183</sup>Lewis, Left Wings over Europe, 43.

<sup>184</sup>*Ibid.*, 297. In The Art of Being Ruled, under the heading "Agricultural Thought and Industrial Thought," Lewis criticized Bertrand Russell's argument that, since mankind thinks agriculturally, all progress must be slow. Against this emotional claim of the English liberal, Lewis offered the following propositions. "Men are not cabbages, and, perhaps unfortunately, they are infinitely teachable. Caught very young, a new mankind almost could be made from one generation to the next." 31, 47.

<sup>185</sup>Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 44.

<sup>186</sup>*Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>187</sup>Montgomery-Hyde, Lord Justice, 391. Montgomery-Hyde is here quoting testimony from a libel trial Mosley brought against a London newspaper The Star November 4 and 5, 1934. The Star had written that Mosley's Fascist party planned to take over the British government by force.

<sup>188</sup>Mosley, The Greater Britain, 14-15.

<sup>189</sup>Mosley, My Life, 286.

<sup>190</sup>Nicolson, Diaries and Letters. 1930-39, 71.

<sup>191</sup>*Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>192</sup>Mosley, My Life, 270.

<sup>193</sup>Nicolson, Diaries and Letters. 1930-39, 91.

<sup>194</sup>*Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>195</sup>*Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>196</sup>Lewis, Rude Assignment, 31.

<sup>197</sup>*Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>198</sup>Sorel, Reflections on Violence, 32.

<sup>199</sup>*Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>200</sup>Lewis, Rude Assignment, 34.

<sup>201</sup>Sorel, Reflections on Violence, 180.



- 202<sup>Lewis, Rude Assignment, 37.</sup>
- 203<sup>Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 129-130.</sup>
- 204<sup>Shils, "Georges Sorel," 15.</sup>
- 205<sup>Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 7-8.</sup>
- 206<sup>Lewis, The Mysterious Mr. Bull, 211.</sup>
- 207<sup>Ibid., 211.</sup>
- 208<sup>Ibid., 199.</sup>
- 209<sup>Lewis, The Hitler Cult, 221.</sup>
- 210<sup>Lewis, The Mysterious Mr. Bull, 219.</sup>
- 211<sup>Lewis, Paleface, 269.</sup>
- 212<sup>Ibid., 256-7.</sup>
- 213<sup>Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 70-1.</sup>
- 214<sup>Lewis, Rude Assignment, 169. One notes particularly his use of the Stoics' concept apathy.</sup>
- 215<sup>Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 230.</sup>
- 216<sup>Ibid., 235.</sup>
- 217<sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 262.</sup>
- 218<sup>Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 211.</sup>
- 219<sup>Ibid., 200</sup>
- 220<sup>Ibid., 215.</sup>
- 221<sup>Ibid., 213.</sup>
- 222<sup>Kenner, Wyndham Lewis, 138.</sup>
- 223<sup>Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 32.</sup>
- 224<sup>Ibid., 191.</sup>
- 225<sup>Ibid., 193.</sup>
- 226<sup>Lewis, Left Wings over Europe, 299.</sup>
- 227<sup>Ibid., 305.</sup>
- 228<sup>Lewis, Rude Assignment, 167 n.</sup>



<sup>229</sup>Lewis, Hitler, 162.

<sup>230</sup>Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 428.

<sup>231</sup>Lewis, Snooty Baronet, 113-114. See also Hitler, 159-160.

<sup>232</sup>Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 29.

<sup>233</sup>*Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>234</sup>*Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>235</sup>*Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>236</sup>Quoted in Bullock, Hitler, 470.

<sup>237</sup>Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 157-8.

<sup>238</sup>*Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>239</sup>*Ibid.*, 82-3.

<sup>240</sup>*Ibid.*, 219. The term 'nice-dog' used here recalls the language Lewis used in the conclusion of an article published in The British Union Quarterly: "At present I am confining myself to an agitation for health-centres and clinical facilities for those brought mentally below par by a diet of Trust me dog biscuits--for sons of bitches born into a world made safe till-the-next-time, for yes-manly Fidos." Lewis, "Left Wings and the C3 Mind," 124.

<sup>241</sup>The 'scrap of paper' is notorious in the history of the origins of the First World War as well. The term generically used means any agreement that can be lightly set aside or disregarded. The entry in the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary for 'scrap of paper' indicates that the term originally came from a comment made by the German Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg during the July crisis of 1914, referring to the treaty securing the neutrality of Belgium. This treaty was ruthlessly disregarded and was thus termed a 'scrap of paper.' See also Lewis's comment in The Hitler Cult: "[Hitler] said the other day that Bethmann-Hollweg (he of 'the scrap of paper') was a civilian occasionally dressed up as a major, whereas he, the present Chancellor of Germany, is a soldier who sometimes wears civilian clothes." Lewis, The Hitler Cult, 7.

<sup>242</sup>Gilbert and Gott, The Appeasers, 179.

<sup>243</sup>Gilbert, The Roots of Appeasement, 222.

<sup>244</sup>Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 64.

<sup>245</sup>*Ibid.*, 240.

<sup>246</sup>*Ibid.*, 234.



<sup>247</sup>Ibid., 233.

<sup>248</sup>Lewis, "Creatures of Habit and Creatures of Change," 19.

<sup>249</sup>Stendhal, Promenades dans Rome, iii, 200-201.

<sup>250</sup>Lewis, Letters, 332.

#### Chapter Four

<sup>1</sup>Lewis, Monstre Gai, 263.

<sup>2</sup>They were published together in one volume. The general title is The Human Age. Book Two Monstre Gai. Book Three Malign Fiesta.

<sup>3</sup>Lewis, Monstre Gai, 3.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 4, 3.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 3-4.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 143.

<sup>8</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 282. / (1956) 352.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 292. / (1956) 364.

<sup>10</sup>Lewis, Monstre Gai, 26.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 154.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 131.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 27.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 7-8.

<sup>16</sup>Lewis, Paleface, 219.

<sup>17</sup>Lewis, Monstre Gai, 11.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 43.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 19.

The passion of David Lloyd George for biblical place-names has been noted by many commentators. See McCormick, The Mask of Merlin, 25.

<sup>20</sup>Lewis, Monstre Gai, 102.





- <sup>21</sup>Ibid., 204.
- <sup>22</sup>Ibid., 25.
- <sup>23</sup>Ibid., 41.
- <sup>24</sup>Ibid., 35.
- <sup>25</sup>Ibid., 45.
- <sup>26</sup>Ibid., 46.
- <sup>27</sup>Ibid., 101.
- <sup>28</sup>Ibid., 12.
- <sup>29</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 18. / (1956) 27-28.
- <sup>30</sup>Swift, Gulliver's Travels, 208.
- <sup>31</sup>Lewis, Monstre Gai, 43.
- <sup>32</sup>Ibid., 93.
- <sup>33</sup>Ibid., 92.
- <sup>34</sup>Ibid., 47, 48.
- <sup>35</sup>Ibid., 196.
- <sup>36</sup>Ibid., 258. See also references to the Bailiff's rackets on 136, 230-232.
- <sup>37</sup>Ibid., 249.
- <sup>38</sup>Ibid., 128.
- <sup>39</sup>Ibid., 147.
- <sup>40</sup>Ibid., 215-216.
- <sup>41</sup>Ibid., 216.
- <sup>42</sup>Ibid., 65.
- <sup>43</sup>Ibid., 254.
- <sup>44</sup>Ibid., 89-90, 102, 103.
- <sup>45</sup>Ibid., 120-121.
- <sup>46</sup>Ibid., 124-125.
- <sup>47</sup>Ibid., 35, 136.



<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 230, 232.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 199.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 148-149. Lewis contrasted the gentle values of sparrow-life with the harshness of the machine technology in The Revenge for Love. In that work too the telephone is connected with a power-broker figure. See 144-146 of that novel and Chapter V, below.

<sup>51</sup>Lewis, Monstre Gai, 248.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 262.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 132.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 232.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 227.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 246.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 105.

<sup>58</sup>Revelations. 13: 11, 18.

<sup>59</sup>Crowley, The Confessions of Aleister Crowley, 387-388.

<sup>60</sup>Lewis, Monstre Gai, 24.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 26.

<sup>62</sup>Gilson, "Foreword" to The City of God, lxxx.

<sup>63</sup>Lewis, Monstre Gai, 130-131.

<sup>64</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 137. / (1956) 172.

<sup>65</sup>Lewis, Monstre Gai, 121.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 126.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 122.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 127.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 149.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., 173.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 144.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 165.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., 167.



<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 174. 'Phanuel' was the name of the prophet who predicted the martyrdom of John the Baptist in Flaubert's "Hérodias." The number 400 may suggest the expression "The Four-Hundred," used to refer to the elite of New York society in the 1890's. The term, still in use, is thought to have derived from the capacity of Mrs. Vanderbilt's ballroom.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 172.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 173, 174.

<sup>77</sup>The words Phanuel and Faneuil are pronounced the same way.

<sup>78</sup>Lewis, Monstre Gai, 171, 175.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 141.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 242-245.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 33.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., 49.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 74-75.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., 156.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 158.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., 80.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 29.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 157, 86, 87.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 55.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 56.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., 58.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., 58-59. In A Layman's Guide to Atomic Physics, J.M. Valentine gives the following as the sequence of events from the moment of detonation of an air burst of an atom bomb:

"First, the nuclear explosive is transformed into an intensely hot 'ball of fire'—a miniature sun—which, in an air burst, expands rapidly to several hundred feet in diameter. The fire-ball will emit a brilliant light, much brighter than the sun; it may last for several seconds in the case of a hydrogen bomb. The heat radiated from the fire-ball travels with the speed of light, and is one of the important results of the explosion. Another is the blast, or shock, wave which also originates in the fireball but which travels to the target more slowly. It has a velocity only a little greater than the speed of sound. After the initial blinding flash, the ball of fire loses brilliance rapidly and





risers with its cloud of swirling gases many thousands of feet in the air. Within minutes the familiar mushroom-shaped cloud has formed. . . . The blast from a high-explosive bomb is a sharp blow, while that from an atomic bomb is more like a strong wind in its effect." 150-151.

<sup>93</sup>Lewis, Monstre Gai, 75.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., 89.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., 156.

<sup>96</sup>Lifton, Death in Life, 57-58.

<sup>97</sup>Lewis, Monstre Gai, 300, 304.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., 263-4.

<sup>99</sup>Lewis, Malign Fiesta, 310, 311.

<sup>100</sup>Lewis, Monstre Gai, 228.

<sup>101</sup>Lewis, Malign Fiesta, 465.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 489, 521.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., 483.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid., 493.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., 492.

<sup>106</sup>"These applicants for wives displayed great zeal. Even, up in the top corner of many of their appeals, a rough drawing of the male sexual organ appeared. This was understood as a token of urgency."

Lewis, Malign Fiesta, 543. Note also Ibid., 552.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., 544.

<sup>108</sup>Lewis, Monstre Gai, 8.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid., 4.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., 303-304.

<sup>111</sup>Lewis, Malign Fiesta, 316.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., 330.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., 317.

<sup>114</sup>"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them,



and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Hebrews 11:13.

<sup>115</sup>Lewis, Malign Fiesta, 440.

<sup>116</sup>Lewis Monstre Gai, 175.

The narrator's note of irony is struck again in *Ibid.*, 194. It is a function of the increasing satiric distance between the author (and reader) and the character under satiric surveillance, James Pullman.

<sup>117</sup>Lewis, Malign Fiesta, 372.

<sup>118</sup>*Ibid.*, 324.

<sup>119</sup>*Ibid.*, 356. Note also in this connection *Ibid.*, 368, 373, 407.

<sup>120</sup>*Ibid.*, 424.

<sup>121</sup>*Ibid.*, 345.

<sup>122</sup>*Ibid.*, 350.

<sup>123</sup>*Ibid.*, 361-363.

<sup>124</sup>*Ibid.*, 361.

<sup>125</sup>Lewis, Monstre Gai, 304, 316.

<sup>126</sup>Lewis, Malign Fiesta, 366.

<sup>127</sup>*Ibid.*, 420.

<sup>128</sup>*Ibid.*, 419.

<sup>129</sup>*Ibid.*, 427, 474-475.

The reference to Nellie Melba at this point recalls also the early history of radio broadcasting in Great Britain. Lord Northcliff arranged a publicity demonstration of the potential of radio, when he had the famous singer perform in English, Italian and French on June fifteenth, 1920. A phonograph record of the performance was made in Paris, where the broadcast was received in the radio operations room of the Eiffel Tower. Asa Briggs wrote that "the Melba broadcast was the turning point in the public response to radio." The Birth of Broadcasting, 47.

<sup>130</sup>Lewis, Malign Fiesta, 421.

<sup>131</sup>*Ibid.*, 402.

"The crisis of respect for humanity is only assuming universal proportions today. But with world war i and its sequel it began already to appear. It has been immeasurably aggravated by world war ii and its sequels. The cheapening of human life—until we all have grown rather like doctors in



our necessary callousness about the human animal, whose 'ideals' look sillier at every fresh homicidal outburst: the lowest standards of life ensuing upon war—all of this conspires to dethrone homo sapiens and to put in his place homo stultus, or the Yahoo of Swift."

Lewis, Rude Assignment, 24-25.

<sup>132</sup>Lewis, Monstre Gai, 232, 257, 267.

<sup>133</sup>Lewis, Malign Fiesta, 431.

<sup>134</sup>Ibid., 470, 476.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid., 427.

<sup>136</sup>Ibid., 377.

<sup>137</sup>Ibid., 372.

<sup>138</sup>Ibid., 375.

<sup>139</sup>Ibid., 379

<sup>140</sup>Ibid., 380.

<sup>141</sup>Ibid., 317.

<sup>142</sup>Lewis, Monstre Gai, 110.

<sup>143</sup>Lewis, Malign Fiesta, 407.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid., 433.

<sup>145</sup>Ibid., 477.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid., 410.

<sup>147</sup>Ibid., 335, 374, 379.

<sup>148</sup>Ibid., 357.

<sup>149</sup>Ibid., 494, 473.

<sup>150</sup>Ibid., 502, 503.

<sup>151</sup>Ibid., 509.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid., 534.

<sup>153</sup>Ibid., 541.

<sup>154</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 316. / (1956) 394.



<sup>155</sup>The Bailiff's mother gives the following account of the origin of the Bailiff's race:

"You perhaps have heard how a great many angels grew tired of the sterility of their life in Heaven, and, when they established themselves, in some sort, on the Earth, according to the view of the God Almighty (as you call him), most improperly had carnal intercourse with women. Eventually a race of giants came to pass. We poor square-nosed persons were the outcome. We have enough of the angelic and the supernatural in our blood to cause us to differ from men."

Lewis, Malign Fiesta, 335.

"There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came into the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown."

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Genesis. 6: 4, 5.

That Lewis here connects the Nephalem of the Bible with the Bailiff's race in Matapolis, suggests that he associates the Bailiff's feminine materialism with William Blake's myth of the Fall. Milton Percival discusses Blake's use of the Nephalem in this connection in his William Blake's Circle of Destiny, 116 and 180.

<sup>156</sup>Lewis, Malign Fiesta, 511.

<sup>157</sup>Ibid., 456.

<sup>158</sup>Ibid., 351.

<sup>159</sup>Lewis, Monstre Gai, 5.

<sup>160</sup>Lewis, Malign Fiesta, 419.

<sup>161</sup>Ibid., 511.

<sup>162</sup>Ibid., 528.

<sup>163</sup>Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 85.

<sup>164</sup>Lewis, "Studies in the Art of Laughter," 511.

<sup>165</sup>Lewis, Malign Fiesta, 566.

## Chapter Five

<sup>1</sup>Lewis, The Childermass, 16. / (1956) 25.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 6. / (1956) 10.

<sup>3</sup>Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, [1]. (Lewis quotes the Butler passage in italics.)





<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 11-12.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 12.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 14.

<sup>7</sup>Lewis, The Lion and the Fox, 84.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 49.

<sup>9</sup>"To build up a critical organism, composed of the most living material of observed fact, which could serve as an ally of new creative effort--something like an immense watch-dog trained to secure by its presence the fastness of the generally ill-protected theoretic man, guaranteed suitably to protect such minds as cared to avail themselves of it--that was the kind of thing I had in mind in starting to write my recent book, The Art of Being Ruled." Lewis, Time and Western Man, 136.

<sup>10</sup>"The rat, the mouse, the fox, the rabbit; watch the roots, the lion, the tyger, the horse, the elephant, watch the fruits." Blake, "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," Plate 8, line 34. The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, 36.

Lewis, "Creatures of Habit and Creatures of Change," 18.

Lewis wrote in The Art of Being Ruled that "politics and science are today commutative." 3.

<sup>11</sup>Lewis, "The Physiognomy of our Time," The Caliph's Design, 266, 267.

<sup>12</sup>Lewis, "Inferior Religions," The Wild Body, 233, 237.

In his essay, "The Meaning of the Wild Body," Lewis wrote that it was this consciousness of self that made human experience so richly various:

"The root of the comic is to sought in the sensations resulting from the observations of a thing behaving like a person. But from that point of view all men are necessarily comic: for they are all things, or physical bodies, behaving as persons. It is only when you come to deny that they are 'persons,' or that there is any 'mind' or 'person' there at all, that the world of appearance is accepted as quite natural, and not at all ridiculous. Then, with a denial of 'the person,' life becomes immediately both 'real' and very serious." Ibid., 246.

<sup>13</sup>Lewis, The Revenge for Love, 13.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 19.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 144, 145.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 146.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 120.



<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 233.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 266.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 269.

<sup>21</sup>Lewis, The Doom of Youth, ix.

<sup>22</sup>Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 233.

<sup>23</sup>Lewis, "The Physiognomy of our Time," The Caliph's Design, 265.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 263-264.

<sup>25</sup>Lewis, Rude Assignment, 96-97.

<sup>26</sup>Lewis, America and Cosmic Man, 186.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 138.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 169.

"With a start of surprise (followed by apathy) we find ourselves in the presence of the so-called Atom Bomb. Perhaps that will do what the sermon on the Mount failed to accomplish. That this will come to pass before long--that the inhabitants of this planet have not only the chance, but the certainty, of again enjoying one government instead of a plurality--may, I believe, with complete confidence be predicted." Ibid., 180.

<sup>29</sup>Lewis, Rude Assignment, 193.

<sup>30</sup>Lewis, Monstre Gai, 302.

<sup>31</sup>Lewis, Malign Fiesta, 439.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 349.

<sup>33</sup>Lewis, Monstre Gai, 124. A little instrument is fixed into Pullman's ear at the Bailiff's party and is then connected to an "almost invisible pencil-like object, which was looped around his forefinger." This device held like a pen, recalls Pullman the Penman's swagger-stick, held penwise along his index finger in The Childermass. Lewis, The Childermass, 10. / (1956) 18.

<sup>34</sup>Lewis, Malign Fiesta, 495-496.

<sup>35</sup>Lewis, Monstre Gai, 315.

<sup>36</sup>Indeed, in Sammael's office, stripped of his technological magic, the Bailiff can only fold his hands penitentially over his modest grey alpaca suit. At the end of the interview, as the police drag the Bailiff out to the punishment centre, he leaves his false teeth embedded in the palm of a policeman's hand.  
Lewis, Malign Fiesta, 391, 399.



<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 317.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 565.

Satters's predicament at this point echoes one of Lewis's experiences during his service as artillery officer in World War One. Sent out to 'register' an observation post on the Line, Lewis and his fellow observers found themselves observed by a dirigible sent up for reconnaissance by the German command. Soon, the Germans began shelling the small party as it tried to cross a field of mud by means of a narrow duckboard walk. The shells fell first behind them, then in front, 'bracketing' Lewis and his companions in an ever narrower zone of safety: "The next shell came very near indeed, with a furious wallop," Lewis reported; and he leapt into a shell-hole, with an N.C.O. right on his heels. "The[shell] shook the earth at the side of us, in providing our shell-hole with a mate. I got under the lee of our little excavation, and my companion pressed up against me silently, all knees and elbows. No fellow human has ever impinged with so resolute a pressure upon my own flesh, as did the body of this N.C.O." Lewis, Blasting and Bombardiering, 174.

<sup>39</sup>Lewis, Malign Fiesta, 535.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 536.

<sup>41</sup>Lewis, "The Objective of Art in our Time," 331, 332.

<sup>42</sup>Lewis, The Red Priest, 160-161.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 8.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 48.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 107.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 245.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 43.

<sup>48</sup>These are the headings of Chapters X and XII in an essay on Sartre, Malraux, and Camus in Lewis's The Writer and the Absolute.

<sup>49</sup>Lewis, The Red Priest, 8.

<sup>50</sup>"Like those who assert that 'war brings out the best in people' (it is a saying of which I am not very fond) Sartre tells us that 'L'homme tout entier' (man, all of him, or total man--a first cousin of 'L'homme tout nu', another objectionable abstraction) is only visible during the bombardments or massacres, at the moment of a coup d'état, or in the torture chamber. This total man is to him so momentous an entity that one cannot help feeling that he 'says Yea'--as Nietzsche would put it--to wars, plagues, revolutions, massacres, etc. . . ." Lewis, The Writer and the Absolute, 81-2.





<sup>51</sup>Lewis, The Red Priest, 107.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 108-109. At another point in the novel, a Father Makepeace delivers a guest lecture at St. Catherine of the Angels on the subject of Indian Religion. He speaks of the Vedic Brahman-atman which defines the self and makes it one with its immanent God. Father Card urges his parishioners to interrupt the speaker, and demands that Makepeace "abandon the learned mode of his address." When the meeting falls apart and Father Makepeace walks out, Card's comment suggests that he excludes himself from the requirement of self-abasement and small-feeling: "'That paragon makes me feel small, that is the fact of the matter,' said Father Card. 'I must send him back where he came from, and tell them that we are all people of a normal size here, he makes us feel as if we were in Lilliput. Ask if they haven't got anyone smaller.'" Ibid., 230, 232.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 125.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 243-244.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 38, 39.

<sup>56</sup>Lewis, The Writer and the Absolute, 84.

<sup>57</sup>Lewis, The Red Priest, 8.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 90.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 238.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 237.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 169-171.

In a letter written in 1953, during the time of the trials of the Mau-Mau terrorists in Kenya, Lewis argued that the lenient attitude of the British authorities was a token of the bankruptcy of English 'liberalism.' "I hate disorder; I call this 'The Politics of Genius.' Those who indulge in baby-talk about feeling brotherly towards highly-organized terrorist armies in Malaya, or Kenya, or elsewhere, make me weak with accumulated exasperation." Lewis, Letters, 549-550.

<sup>62</sup>Lewis, The Red Priest, 42.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 287.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 291.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 292.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 125. As Card proposes to Mary, she thinks that "this trained fighting machine could crush most men---it was a redoubtable object to have so near to one, as if a locomotive had suddenly whispered to her a sweet nothing." Ibid., 185-186.



<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 298.

We recall here Pullman's insight at the end of Malign Fiesta: "There are men who only value power. This is absurd, because power destroys value. Value can only exist with multiplicity. The only value for Sammael is solipsistic. I, Pullman, am existing in a valueless vacuum called Sammael." Lewis, Malign Fiesta, 528.

Again, Lewis discussed the treacherous potential of the power vacuum in his analysis of the French existentialist writers: "How many people were there in Western Europe between the wars nursing feverish power-complexes, besides the Dukes and the Führers? Malraux's account of his own power-impulses represented them as an escape from Nothingness--on the part of a 'nihilistic' and 'negative' thinker--would not some such formula have accommodated Hitler very well? The filling of a void with shouting crowds, and tramping feet, by a man who was convulsively wrenching himself out of Nothingness?" Lewis, The Writer and the Absolute, 94-95.

<sup>68</sup>Laurence, Dawn over Zero, 189.

<sup>69</sup>Lewis, Rude Assignment, 183.

<sup>70</sup>Lewis, The Red Priest, 15.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 15-16.

<sup>72</sup>Pullman is described throughout Monstre Gai as a rat. See, for example, 221-223.

In his essay "Creatures of Habit and Creatures of Change," Lewis quoted Blake's line "The rat, the mouse, the fox, the rabbit watch the roots." He then commented, "Revolution is still to some extent subterranean; hence we live, as yet, somewhat in a world of rats and foxes." 18.

<sup>73</sup>Lewis, The Wild Body, 237.

<sup>74</sup>Swift, Correspondence, 118.

<sup>75</sup>Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 85.

<sup>76</sup>Lewis, The Wild Body, 238.



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